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761 life when it is classed socially with the females, gradually becomes more and more ritualized and sacred as the individual grows older and approaches death, and at death once more becomes completely spiritual and sacred. This is the life of all Murngin men. A woman, on the other hand, passes out of the sacred existence of the unborn to the profane existence of the born and living, and back again to the sacred existence of the dead; but little sacred progress is made during her lifetime.

562 Obviously the principle of the social bifurcation of the sexes has been
561 used to create the lowest status, that of women and children. The women's group remains comparatively undifferentiated, while the men's group becomes highly segmented and graded through participation in the totemic mysteries. The age-grading structure largely controls the degree of participation a man has in his society. The older men exercise their control largely through their power to say whether or not a man can go from one age grade to another. It is only they who possess the knowledge which makes up the totemic ideology.

561 The participation of a Murngin in the age-grading structure revolves around, first, his position in the immediate family structure, and, secondly, his place in the ceremonial mysteries. The life of man is divided into a number of stages marked by the *rites de passage*. The life crises of an individual, including birth, maturity, and death, are set off by elaborate rituals. These rituals correspond roughly to a man's position in the family structure. When he is circumcised he moves out of his family of orientation[6] into a men's camp; and at the time he creates his own family, that of procreation,[6] he moves into higher age grades by seeing his totems in a series of rituals. Chart I, page 11, expresses in summary fashion the relation of man's place in the social organization to his place in the age-graded ceremonial life.

562 The first principle of age grading, the sexual bifurcation by which
155 women are excluded from participation in the totemic mysteries, immediately limits female behavior in the society and tends to simplify their personalities. The man's social personality, on the contrary, expands and becomes more complex by his participation in the various elaborate age-graded rituals. There seems to be considerable evidence for a relationship between this and a man's comparatively complex technological behavior and a woman's more simple type. The Murngin man handles more complicated tools and weapons, and uses more complex techniques in making and using them than does his female kinswoman;

[6] See Glossary of Technical Terms.

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it is one of the theses of this book that a man's social value is correspondingly more important, and his place in the rituals is partly due to and partly expresses this fact.

A man's or woman's place in Murngin society is fixed by his or her position in the kinship structure. The totality of his behavior toward all the people in his community and of their behavior in relation to him, with all the concomitant obligations, duties, and privileges, is determined by his being placed exactly in this social structure through the operation of certain mechanisms. Social space in the sense of social stratification has no vertical extension in Murngin society; but the kinship space[7] has the usual kind of vertical structure found in all kinship systems, namely, the extension which is created by the generations above and below a man (ego). Generation recognition does not extend beyond the usual five of the normal vertical kinship structure, but the lateral structure has been extended to three lines on both sides (paternal and maternal) of the line of a man's own lineage, making a total of seven.

The whole of the social organization is built on the pattern of kinship. The kinship system is the fundamental form into which the rest of the social organization has been integrated. The greater part of the behavior of the Murngin can be understood only in terms of his behavior as a kinsman. The very complex kinship structure with its seven lines of descent and five generations in each line is but an elaboration of the immediate families of orientation[8] and of procreation,[8] that is, of the family into which an individual is born and that which he creates at marriage. The underlying mechanism controlling the relations of these two families is that of asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage, which here means that a man marries his maternal uncle's daughter but not his father's sister's daughter. As will be demonstrated in other parts of this chapter, the result of this asymmetry has been to give a tremendous lateral spread to the kinship structure instead of keeping it narrowed to the two lines of descent where symmetrical cross-cousin marriage takes place.

The Murngin have doubled the count of thirty-five relatives created by five generations and seven lines of descent, through the division of each of these on the basis of brother and sister relation. In addition, by the use of the principle of age in generation, separating older

[7] See Sorokin, Pitirim A., *Social Mobility*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1927.
[8] See Glossary of Technical Terms.

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132 In the rainy season great torrents of tropical rain fall daily, making
312 large portions of the mainland south of the Arafura Sea, for weeks and sometimes months at a time, a series of islands in a shallow sea of mud and water. Then, with rare interruptions, there is continuous drought for six or seven months. During the wet season tropical vege-
[137] tation has sprung up everywhere; giant spear grass sometimes grows to twelve and fourteen feet in height, covering all the country and paths, making communication a difficult matter at best, and in many places impossible. The water recedes, the water holes become drier and drier, and a large number disappear entirely; birds and fish are gone, and the many varieties of lilies and yams disappear. It is then that the native appreciates the value of water, just as before he realized the harm it could do him. It is doubtful if anyone ever died of thirst in this country, but it is certain that many have felt its pangs. Deaths have occurred from the great floods. It is small wonder that with the food
[823] and drink of life dependent on the water holes, and possible death resulting from the great floods, the native has made water his chief symbol of the clan's spiritual life.

312 The water hole may be an ordinary small lake or billibong, a river
778 or creek flooding through the domain of the clan, a spring of water, or a native well or water hole; and in a few cases it may be the ocean itself, but this last form is usually associated with a tidal spring.[9] All the water holes found in the territory of a clan are divided into two classes: they are either garma wells or narra (ranga) wells. The first are totemic but not sacred; they were made by the lower order of totems, whose emblems may be displayed in camp and seen by the women. The narra wells are always sacred; they were made by the higher wongar totems, whose emblems are ranga (higher emblems) and can be seen only by the initiated young men after the age of puberty. A clan always has at least one and sometimes three or four of the latter.

778 The narra water hole is usually not taboo to women. They may
● [562] obtain water there, bathe in the pool, and possibly fish or gather yams and lily bulbs. Occasionally a well becomes so taboo that no woman is allowed near it. Such is the great well, Mir-rir-min-a, of the

[192] [9] The following native terms are used: a water hole or well, mang-o-tji (literally, eye); a spring, mil-min-jerk; river, man-i (literally, throat); creek, par-ka; a small rill running from a spring or artesian well, ri-el-la; billibong, lum-mi (upper thigh); rock-basin water, gar-ra (rain) nar-ku-la (water); fresh-water bog, mar-a-ka; saline but drinkable bog water, gal-la-min-dir; the ocean, or salt spring, or any salt water which is undrinkable, ka-pu mon-ok (water salt).

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The sacred ones are used only during the great ceremonies, usually the Narra for the great majority of totems. It is then that all the wells of a moiety and the names of its dead ancestors are called out by the leader. The camp name is the one known by both men and women. No woman knows the sacred name of a well, or, for that matter, anything else that has to do with the sacred tribal life.

The list on page 46 shows that the chief totem of the Liaalaomir clan is a carpet snake. The names of the well are carpet snake's nose and menstruation blood, the latter referring indirectly to the actions of the snake.

The Djirin clan has the shark for a totem (see list, page 45), and the following names for its well: shark's head, ripples from a shark's swimming, hill from a tidal wave made by the shark when he created this country.

Although the well names refer to a totem which belongs to the other clans in the moiety, they also refer in particular to geographical aspects of one clan's territory, so that they have local significance. The same is true of the names of the mythological ancestors.

A man's name is taken from his male mari (mother's mother's brother) and his male marikmo (father's father). All sacred names are his marikmo's and not his mari's, but a man's camp names come chiefly from his mari; these latter also usually reflect totemic affiliation.

The symbol of the well is also painted on a man after his initiation and when he receives his totemic name in the Narra corroboree, and on a small boy when he is to be circumcised.

In addition to the relatives listed on page 16 as always included in the clan, there may be included within the clan: mari, male and female (mother's mother and mother's mother's brother); mokul rumeru (mother's mother's brother's daughter); marelker (mother's mother's brother's son); kutara, male and female (sister's daughter's son and sister's daughter's daughter); gurrong, male and female (father's sister's daughter's son and father's sister's daughter's daughter).

These relatives, too, may be blood or tribal in their relationship to ego. Men, for example, may be called brothers by ego and be clan members only remotely related to ego. The usual Murngin method of reckoning kin does not always operate within the clan, for, when there have been wrong marriages,[12] the practice of tracing descent through the mother and ignoring the father does not function. This

[12] See pages 105-106.

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614 tant person. Gatu mielk sees her as a possible mother of her husband and, with marriage matters definitely settled, would make presents to her as such. Husband's mother and son's wife are usually together after the second year of marriage. Gatu diramo would always go to his mokul bapa among others for food if he were hungry.

604 When a man dies and his father is exhuming his bones, all the other women relatives are kept back of a windbreak and forbidden to have
562 a full view of the proceedings; but mokul bapa is allowed to stand by
765 the men and watch, occupying in a lesser degree the position her brother holds in this respect. Further, she, among others, is given the bones of her dead gatu to carry before they are finally put into a hollow log coffin.

604 She occupies as an individual the same position as the father's brothers, who also call their brother's children sons and daughters. She belongs to the same generation and patrilineal line as father's brothers and except for sex she is in every respect the same as they; her brother's children treat her with the respect due their fathers. A better understanding of her position can be gained by examining the relations of brother and sister.

605 So far we have discussed only the social personalities in ego's own patrilineal line. We now turn to two new lines of descent—the alternating dué-waku line which terminates in the term kaminyer; and the momo-nati and arndi-gawel line found, with galle added, in ego's own generation and the second descending generation.

Dué ⟷ *Galle* (diramo and mielk) (father's sister's child ⟷ mother's brother's child)

This reciprocal has four varieties: (1) dué (man) and galle (woman); (2) dué (man) and galle (man); (3) dué (woman) and galle (woman); and (4) dué (woman) and galle (man).

There are five varieties of the first relationship: (1) cohabiting galle and dué who are actually father's sister's sons and mother's brother's daughters; (2) cohabiting galle and dué who are from more distant clans; (3) actual father's sister's sons and mother's brother's daughters who are married to other dué and galle; (4) galle and dué from the same clan as the father's sister's husband and mother's brother; and (5) galle and dué from more remote clans.

605 The dué diramo and galle mielk relationship regulates the greater
595 part of sexual behavior. The basic idea that a man may have an indefinite number of wives but a woman only one husband at a time

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one of them.' The two old ones say, 'Your first man is dead already.'" [Dorng's brother died and he got Opossum through the levirate.] His old wives were very pleasant and kind to him, but Opossum was a scold. "When I want to sleep with one of the old sisters at night," he said, "Opossum won't go to sleep as she should. I wait and wait; sometimes morning comes, and that woman watches and won't go to sleep. All right, I wait no longer. I play with her. When I do, Opossum growls at me. The old sisters go to sleep, but sometimes they laugh at me when I play with Opossum."

When Mahkarolla's gawel and mokul gave him their second daughter, the first daughter, who was his wife, immediately quarreled with her younger sister and asked her what right she had to be sleeping with Mahkarolla, who belonged only to her. The first wife said nothing to the husband about her opposition to her sister. When her parents heard of it they said to their older daughter, "She is just the same as you. You are our daughter and she is our daughter. You have him for a husband, and we have given her to him, and now she has him for a husband. She is your young sister; you'll now have someone to look out for the wood for you, and she can help you gather food." This stopped all criticism, and the two sisters lived together as wives to Mahkarolla with the utmost amiability and friendship.

This is the usual situation in Murngin marriage when two sisters from one family marry a man. The older sister has more power than the younger one. Trouble between wives is only likely when he marries into two clans distant from each other.

A wife has considerable independence. She is not the badly treated woman of the older Australian ethnologists' theories. She usually asserts her rights. Women are more vocal than men in Murngin society. Frequently they discipline their husbands by refusing to give them food when the men have been away too long and the wives fear they have had a secret affair.

Husbands and wives are strongly united through their children, for both are very fond of their offspring and extremely demonstrative in their affection. To a European, the children are almost intolerable in their demands on their parents and those around them.

As an indication of connubial solidarity, the following is presented. A small child had died and been buried. A day or two after this a camp fight developed only a short distance from the child's grave. The voices of the mother and father could be heard above the din, first pleading with the combatants to stop, and then angrily cursing

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462 food, yams, and other vegetable food. This is generally done communally by the women in the bush where the food is gathered, but women also cook within the camp. Men cook the larger animals, [254] prepare the stone ovens, place the large chunks of meat in the fire, and tend the food to see that it is being properly treated.—It is considered as within the bounds of propriety for the man to move about the camp [562] at night in the way he pleases, but "all women must stay in the house when the men are at home."

85/ Definite taboos are removed from a man's diet when he becomes a father (see pages 68 and 69), as from a woman's when she becomes a 262 mother or too old to have children. After the birth of the child, the parents paint themselves. He takes the bones of his first kills from the basket which had been made by his mother and carries them some distance from the camp. Here a hollow log is cut in the same shape as that for the bones of a dead man, and the bones are put inside it. The "coffin" is put up in the camp in the same manner as a dead man's carved hollow-log coffin. The people who have had meat from the boy while he could not eat put presents of food in his clan's symbolic well, made while he was painting himself.—If a man had eaten [626] of the tabooed foods while in the lower age grades, it is supposed he would become weak and unable to throw a spear in a spear fight; in a makarata it is likely that a spear will go into his leg, it will swell up and his flesh grow rotten while the spear is in his leg. This will also happen if the bones of the animals killed are not put in a hollow log and treated properly. If a young childless man ate porcupine, he would not grow up because "porcupine is a short one."

85/ The reason given for the release from the taboos (see also page 69) is that the young man "becomes more quiet then and does not run about everywhere after other women. He stays in one place and looks out for his own galle and children." In reality, his social personality has grown so that his actual relatives include descending relatives as well as ascending. The birth of a child heightens his emotional ties with his relatives who have children who will marry his children and, in all, puts him in a different status, which is expressed by the release of the food taboos. All this underlying thought agrees with the Murngin idea that marriage does not become complete and permanent until a child is born.

56/ Age grading in Murngin societies is highly ritualistic and controls a man's religious life far more than it does his ordinary daily existence. A man's religious knowledge and his understanding of the sacred

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totemic lore, with the associated myths and rituals, are dependent upon how far he has been initiated into the sacred mysteries. The initiations elevate him from a lower and more profane existence to a higher and more sacred plane and mark his transition from one age grade to a higher and older one. Age grading, then, controls the degree of sacred participation a man has within the community.

The older men are the final repositories of all the sacred knowledge which can be obtained only by their willingness to initiate the younger men of the lower ranks into their own group. The older men, therefore, by virtue of the age-grade system, control the younger men fairly effectively. It is partly through the exercise of the sanction of refusing to allow a man to be initiated into certain ceremonies, or threatening to do so, that they can maintain the effectiveness of Murngin gerontocracy. In addition, the old men, felt to be in closer touch with the clan ancestors and totems through their deeper participation in the sacred myths and rituals, effect discipline by invoking the religious sanctions: dire things will happen to men who commit acts the old men frown on and which offend the totemic spirits and ancient ancestors. For example, a man who starts a fight or who commits adultery during a ceremony may be told that his real ancestors and his totemic ancestors will not allow the totemic fish soul to enter his wife, she will be childless—a thing all Murngin men would make every effort to avoid. The offending young man may also be told that the totemic ancestors will not come to direct him to his totemic water hole if he is killed in a fight, or that they will refuse to answer him in a time of need, as when he is in a fight or drowning.

The first effective age grading in the lives of the Murngin occurs when the entire group is sexually bifurcated. The young boy is circumcised and immediately enters the portals of a sacred realm which is forever taboo to his sister, promised wives, and the entire female population of a tribe. The pidgin-English expression found generally among Australian aborigines, "make him a young man," describes what takes place in the minds of the natives: that is, the boy is taken out of the social status of female and put in the social category of male by the use of certain rites of passage. His later initiations take him spiritually further and further from his original profane innocence of the uncircumcised child, where sociologically he is treated as a woman, and they translate him grade by grade into the group's mysteries. The young girl grows into womanhood and continues in the ordinary world with only an outsider's knowledge of the mysteries

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which center in the men's ground and overflow during parts of the rituals into the general camp where her world is centered.

The principle of sex, then, has been used to organize a status group, with the women and small children of either sex in one group and the initiated men in another. The women's group remains ritually undifferentiated in a status sense except for a tendency to give women near or in the menopause preference over younger women in those ceremonies in which women participate. For example, in the Gunabibi the old women beat the ground to stop Muit, and in the Djungguan it is felt to be more appropriate and effective for older women to dance around the warngaitja than for men to do so. This corresponds with the lifting of part of the feeling of taboo around the mother-in-law after she loses many of her secondary sexual characteristics and "gets to be an old woman and looks all the same as a man."

Murngin age grading is largely a religious phenomenon consisting of a series of rites of passage from one age group to another in the life cycle of the individual. It seems, therefore, nearer the truth of Murngin thought to treat the life of the individual as the complete entity it appears to be in the thought of the culture. Each Murngin's beginning is in the sacred totemic well of his ancestors, and each Murngin's end is within the same subterranean depths. His first status is that of the unborn child in the form of a small fish which exists with others of his kind beside the totemic spirits of the clan, the totemic mythological ancestors, the ancient clan dead, and those who have recently died. He is under the control of his ancestors and the totem, and his passage from the world of the unborn to that of the living depends on the good behavior of his parents, particularly of his father. The Murngin think of this from the parents' point of view and conduct their lives more carefully because of the fear of childlessness.

The Murngin baby comes from the totem well through a religious experience of the father, since it is the father who is in touch with the totem world of which the mother is supposed to have no knowledge. The father's mystical dream experience is itself a kind of rite of passage of the unborn and begins the child's socialization. The father's announcement to the mother of the child's arrival (frequently, it must be admitted, after she has reported her pregnancy to the father, who has kept silent, he says, to test the validity of his experience) changes the father's age-grade status. It removes certain ritualistic food taboos and definitely establishes his place in the older men's group. This means, then, that the father-child reciprocal functions as a unit: the

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consummation of his family of procreation through his first child's "birth" effects the father's spiritual birth into a recognized higher status in the community age grouping, and simultaneously the new being is taken into the lowest age grade.

As an old man, the Murngin learns the final mysteries of life by seeing the most esoteric of the totems. Ultimately he dies and assumes a new social status, and by the mourning rite of passage enters his last social grouping, for he still retains a social personality of his own as long as he is in the memory of his group. His ultimate fate is loss of social personality when he is forgotten as an individual and remembered only as an undifferentiated part of a long line of clan ancestors and is absorbed in the general sacredness of the clan well. The sacred power of the clan well derives in part from the knowledge of the souls of the long and the recent dead dwelling within it. The dead soul, when it is ceremonially ushered into the totemic well, is a spiritual part of the man's or woman's participation in the land of the living. The woman's spiritual existence, although not primary and direct as thought of by the Murngin, is nevertheless real and identifiable, for she has a number of sacred totemic names known to her father and brothers, she comes from the totemic water hole as a fish, and vicariously, and to some extent directly, participates in all the sacred totemic rituals. Her partial participation in these rituals which are enacted outside the men's ground also gives her a certain amount of ritualization.

As a man becomes more deeply integrated into his daily community life, that is, when he becomes old enough to go on expeditions as a responsible member of the blood feud and to be held accountable by the enemies of the clan as a part of his group, and when he marries and has children and extends his kinship personality by primary contacts, he at the same time grows deeper and deeper into his esoteric existence and becomes more deeply learned in the rituals and the sacred language.

A review of the chapter on economics and technology quickly convinces one that men make and use the greater number of the more complex tools, weapons, and implements. If all the complexities of the technological apparatus as a part of the society's adaptation to its natural environment were charted, each process receiving a line symbolizing its part in the general technical behavior, it would become apparent that the greater the complexity of the technology, the greater the participation of the men in it, and the simpler the technological processes, the more women participate. There is a possible correlation

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462 between the women's restricted social participation in such parts of
562 the culture as ritual and myth and their simple technological be-
561 havior. Technological behavior obviously is connected with the age-grading situation in Murngin society. It is impossible to say which causes which—both are part of the male-female social dichotomy. There can be no question, however, but that the general profane participation of the women in the technological and economic life of the people is just as restricted when it comes to participating in the more elaborate and highly skilled technical processes as it is in the ritual of the tribe; and that the men's highly developed participation in Murngin ritual finds its counterpart in their greater participation in economic and technological processes which demand a greater degree of manual dexterity and skill and are far more complex techniques. The most elaborate and only complex technique a woman uses is that of making baskets. All other processes which she uses are comparatively simple, with the possible exception of helping to construct some of the bark houses. The same is true of her economic behavior. The digging of yams, the gathering of shells, of roots, of fruit, are probably the simplest of all the economic processes found in Murngin society. It is with these things she is chiefly engaged. Among men the harpooning of turtles—which includes such elaborate technical background as the making of a canoe, its sailing and proper use, the construction of the harpoon and its use—is probably at the maximum end of Murngin technological complexity. As a boy grows up his participation in the use of these techniques grows, paralleled by his ritual growth.

561 In other words, as he generally extends his social personality further into the group in his daily life, he is, at definite intervals, admitted into a deeper understanding of the religious life. If in no other way, he becomes aware of this by being part of the group which forces the younger men through these same rites. He realizes that he enters many of the ceremonies as a part of his older age group, and that he is becoming part of the Python spirit, as when he gives his blood to the Python's Djungguan rite or when he dances with the sacred blood on him. This identification with the essential holiness or final sacred
[626 power necessitates, he realizes, careful conduct and a minute regulation
753] of his daily behavior, for he risks profaning this spirit within himself and resultant sickness or death. The best medicine man among the Murngin told several of his patients that Muit was angry and had made them sick because they failed to see the Gunabibi through to its conclusion—an affront to the Python. The men's group separates

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Djungguan is called Wongar Dal. Wongar is the totemic spirit itself. It is one of the beings which once lived in the earth and now lives in the subterranean waters. It is also the spirit or essence which enters the totemic emblem, so that when the old men's camp is called Wongar Wonga it means totemic spirit's camp. It is here that the totemic emblem is kept when it is not in use during the ceremony. Since the essence of the totemic spirit is supposed to be within the emblem, the camp literally is the place where Wongar lives. The young men who do not belong to the upper age group are told that he actually stays in this place.

The triangular dance ground, where the various dramatic dances are presented before the initiates, represents a snake's body and is also supposed to have the Wawilak sisters and their children inside it. It is supposed to face toward the southeast.

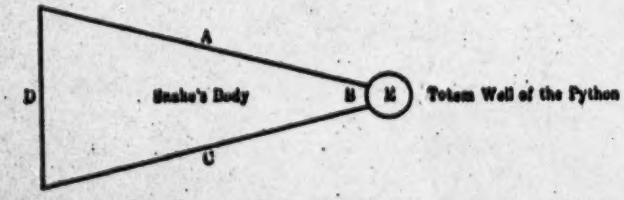

FIGURE 3.—THE TRIANGULAR DANCE GROUND OF THE SNAKE'S BODY

The old men are saturated with all the ritual power that pertains to the totem and its emblems, and the old men's camp therefore takes on a taboo quality, partly because the old men take maraiin there. To a lesser degree, this is true of the camp where the circumcised men are allowed to go. They, to a lesser extent, have assimilated some of the ritual power which allows them to be on this part of the camp ground. Even the women have a minimum of maraiin: they know a part of the ritual tradition; they dance around the warngaitja; they help in dramatizing the removal of the boy from the uncircumcised age group to the circumcised; they paint themselves with red ocher; and, of course, fundamentally they are Murngin social personalities.

The triangular dance ground is made by clearing off a smooth space and heaping a line of earth about ten inches high around its periphery. The earth is then covered with green leaves from any variety of tree. The end (D) is twenty to twenty-five feet across, and from D to B is some forty to fifty feet. A and C represent the side of the snake. "The Wawilak sisters said that (A) was Yiritja moiety and that (C) was Dua

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952 moiety." This division refers to the dance ground and not to Yurlunggur, who was Dua. B is the snake's anus; D is the head where the initiates stand, both in the circumcision part of the ceremony and also in that portion devoted to showing and explaining the totemic emblem to the older initiates.

The circle E is the special house for Yurlunggur erected on the first day of the ceremony and is a windbreak about four feet high and fifteen feet across. The dancers who paint themselves as iguanas in the totem scene ceremony hide there while the earlier part of the Djungguan is taking place.

[533 778] When the Yurlunggur dance ground is made, a cycle of songs is sung over the man who gives his blood to the ceremony (see page 274) by the old men. This makes the ground maraiin because it now possesses the essence of Yurlunggur.

Native Interpretation.—The warngaitja is symbolical of the two boys 773 852 who are being circumcised. "The sticks are all the same as the boys being cut. The bushes on top are all the same as the hair of those boys." I was told each time I heard the Wawilak myth that when "the little sister sang inside the house, the older sister danced around the house just the same as women do now around the warngaitja pole in the Djungguan." When new groups arrive at the Djungguan ceremony, the ritual is being started, and they dance around the warngaitja singing "A-wa!—a-wa!" it is the sound of flood water flowing or of rain falling: "They do that because those two old women did that when they tried to stop the rain." In the Djungguan ceremony older women [887 562] ordinarily do the dancing and wailing. "No young women, only old women do this. Old women are better for the boys—it helps them more. Those old women when they dance are all the same as those Wongar women."

B. The Dancing Each Evening Around the Warngaitja. The Initiates Are Carried into the Men's Ground

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1. The women wail over the neophytes while dancing around the warngaitja pole (or poles); the men rush in and remove the boys to their own grounds.
2. The circle of men around the fire and the sequence of songs and dances.

1. Until the last day of the ceremony dances in the Djungguan are not held during the day except occasionally in the early morning. But

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Masculinity and Femininity as Organizing Principles of the Social Organization as Expressed in the Rituals

562 182 831 In addition to isolating the symbols of the snake as the rainy season and the snake as the men's age-grading group, we can separate out a further symbol which permeates all their thinking and underlies their elaborate organization and social structure. Masculinity is inextricably interwoven with ritual cleanliness, and femininity is equally entwined with the concept of uncleanliness, the former being the sacred principle and the latter the profane. This sexual dichotomy and its correlation with the Murngin beliefs of what are the sacred and profane elements of the group, are again connected with a further principle of human relations, namely, that of superordination and subordination.

562 182 626 771 The superordinate male group, made sacred through the ritual initiation of its individual members into the sacred group, and maintained as a unit by continual participation in the rituals, subordinates the female group which is unified by virtue of exclusion from the ceremonies and of ritual uncleanliness. The superordination of the male is made a mystery by the nexus of masculinity, sacredness, and the seasonal reproductive cycle. Within this mystery lies one of the strongest and most effective sanctions found in Murngin society. The male sacredness becomes more sacrosanct and "holy" as it progresses into the graded deeper mysteries through the age-graded initiations, and this sacredness controls the profane and less sacred elements of society by the invocation of the direct negative sanctions of ritual: "If you young men do not do this, such and such will happen to you." "This man married wrong or that woman has had illegal sexual relations, and our whole group is endangered ["made sick"]." Obviously it behooves everyone to live up to the code of the society; and if he does not, the whole group feels compelled to act to prevent the contagion of his harmful actions causing a general catastrophe. The ceremonial mysteries of the male group, then, help subordinate not only the women and younger boys but also the men themselves, since they too cannot profane the sacred mysteries by some impure and illegal act; if they do, the male group feels obliged to act. In other words, in the local organization of the whole social group from the pinnacle of the old men's age grade to the bottom age grade of women and children, and from the most remote northeastern clan of Wessel Island to the most southeastern one in the far interior, there is a general subordination of the several institutions of the social organization

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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to the higher sacred realm which constitutes the Murngin system of totemism. It is in the ultimate sanctions of the totemic system that Murngin society finds its final unity. The general technology, which is the community's practical adaptation to its natural environment, is disciplined and organized through the instrumentation of social organization. For example, the rules of conduct for various kin personalities, such as gawel and waku, or father and son, regulate the distribution and consumption of the social goods produced by the technology; or, to take another example, the rules of clan membership demand certain divisions of foods, other creature necessities, and services. These and the other laws of the social organization not only discipline the economic life but also relate the individual members and the institutions of the community to each other.

The totemic system provides, first, a final set of absolute sanctions for the society which places a pressure on all the members to perform the acts dictated by the rules of the social organization; and, second, a set of concepts organized into a unified system which provides a mechanism for group integration. The totemic emblem is a concrete symbol of these two basic concepts, and an object which can be manipulated by a series of rituals (primarily the Narra), which elaborate, dramatize, and tie together the various sacred concepts of the myths in the sacred dances and songs. The latent content of these rituals is the myth, and within the myth are the fundamental symbols of the social concepts of totemism. These were the symbols which we analyzed and for which we gave the native interpretation in Chapters IX and X and summarized in the beginning of this chapter. In the present chapter we also presented some of the concepts which underlie the oral rite and dramatic ritual. We found that there is a general idea which surrounds natural phenomena, and that nature is seen as a unity, as an alternation of the dry and rainy season (that is, in the myth the seasonal alternation is symbolized by the conflict of the snake and the two women). The natural phenomena are all organized in this dichotomy. We saw that the seasonal variations are given social categories by the identification of the rainy season with the male principle and the dry period with the female principle. This classification is mechanically accomplished in Murngin thinking by giving the seasons and the age-grade dichotomy the same symbols. The relation of the social category to the natural one is implicit in the myth's account of the wronging of the two women by the ancestors of man

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APPENDIX IV

DREAMS

DREAMS are always related to the extraordinary in Murngin experience. They are never expressive of the ordinary round of events but are definitely placed in the category of the supernatural. It is believed that when a man dreams his soul is moving about over the country away from the body and observing what is going on elsewhere. If, for example, he dreams of a fight in a distant country he believes the soul has been watching this fight in the far-distant country and reporting to his body what has happened. The various experiences that the man dreams are supposed to be those which his soul has been going through during his sleeping hours. During the hot afternoon the men frequently sleep in the shade, and if it becomes necessary to waken one of them, this is never done hurriedly but with great gentleness and care for fear that the soul will not have time to return to the body.

The soul, during these extra-corporeal experiences, is in a world where the totems, the unborn totemic children, and other extra-mundane creatures exist. The dreams in which the soul has all of its extraordinary experiences can be both beneficial and dangerous to the man or woman who dreams. Dreams by women would not fit into the general structure of Murngin society, since the world of the extraordinary is largely experienced by men. There is no doubt that women dream; but the social situation which would cause dreaming in men under many conditions would not exist for women, and if there were any ritual causation of dreaming it would be of a very weak kind.

It is necessary for a man to dream before his child is born. This dream is always of an extraordinary variety since the Murngin consider the child to have left its totem well and approached the father and asked him where it could find its mother. It is the father who directs the child to its mother; it then enters her womb, to be carried by her until birth.

Just before or during a great ceremony such as the Narra, Djungguan, or Gunabibi one or more of the participants is supposed to dream of a recently dead man who belonged to his totemic clan and who possessed the same totem. The power name of the man is then given to the totemic emblem which is to be used, which means to the Murngin that there is an identification between the man and the totem. This spiritualization of the dream to the level of the sacred totemic world finds expression in the fundamental myth in Murngin social organization, namely, the story of the two Wawilak

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Muragin O117

CARVED AND PAINTED FIGURES

The Wawalik Sisters

In the fragment of the *wawalik* ceremonies[75] which we witnessed at Yirrkalla the aborigines used two ceremonial poles. One, Pl. 138B, represents the elder sister whose blood, after she had given birth to a child, offended the serpent, *jurlungur*, which lived in the well, Mirrirmina; the other, Pl. 138A, represents the younger sister.[76]

The Ceremonial Poles. Plate 138B is the complete design on the sacred pole belonging to the elder *Wawalik* sister. The strip of frayed bark on top is her hair and the curving designs, the blood caused by the birth of her child.

Plate 138A belongs to the younger *Wawalik* sister. The lower triangular designs picture the water in the sacred well of *jurlungur*, the serpent. The parallel vertical lines in the upper portion indicate the water flowing into the well.

2. CEREMONIAL OBJECTS FROM NORTH-EASTERN ARNHEM LAND

The Fresh-water Tortoise, Mimala

This bull-roarer, shaped like a paddle, belongs to Diawirinja, west of Arnhem Bay, the totem place of the fresh-water tortoise, *Mimala*. The bull-roarer is so sacred that even its sound must not be heard by the women.

During a burial ceremony at Diawirinja in creation time the fresh-water tortoise, *Mimala*, then a man, made four bull-roarers, similar to the one illustrated, and buried them in those parts of the ceremonial ground over which everyone would dance. Though the women were assisting in the burial rituals, they, of course, were unaware of the sacred objects under their feet. At the conclusion of the rituals *Mimala* hunted the women away, dug the bull-roarers out of the sand and threw them into a nearby waterhole, where they have since been transformed into four large trees. Similar bull-roarers, after they have been used in the present-day *mimala* ceremonies of Diawirinja, are thrown into a sacred waterhole forbidden to the women. Being made of hard, durable wood, it is only necessary, the following year, to take the bull-roarers from the water and re-decorate them.[77]

Plate 144A, B is the obverse and reverse sides of the bull-roarer. The tortoise is shown in panel *a* on B, surrounded by dots indicating the bamboos growing in his totemic swamp. In panel *c* is *Mimala* again, accompanied by an unidentified diving bird with which he is linked in the myth.

Panel *b* on B, and *d*, *e* and *f* on A all picture hives of wild honey, the dots being the bees and the cross-hatched diamonds the honey. The transverse bars, *x*, *x*, *x*, on A and B symbolize the sacred waterhole into which the bull-roarers are thrown at the completion of the *mimala* ceremonies.

75. For more complete myth, see p. 275. 76. Bark painting, Pl. 88A.
77. These and similar sacred objects last for several years under water. If buried in the ground, they would soon be destroyed by termites.

4: Berndt & Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1948
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danced again, and the snake came closer. In fear the two sisters retired to their hut, and the monstrous snake coiled around it and put his head through the opening. He sprayed water over them, so that they became slippery and soft for swallowing; then he proceeded to swallow the baby, the mother and finally the younger sister.

This is of course only the main theme; the original version and song cycle is very long and detailed, and instead of the blood from after-birth, it is menstruation blood that attracts the snake.

The *'Waawɔlak* myth and sacred songs are known to both men and women, but the ritual and part of the ceremony is for men only, and is held away from the camp.[13] However, certain associated ceremonies (e.g. the *'dʒuŋgɐwɔn*) are performed in the main camp, where conventionalized posts are placed to symbolize the *'Waawɔlak* Sisters, around which women dance. In the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land, as in other parts along the coast, women are acquainted with much of the sacred life, but may not discuss it. It is said that they originally monopolized all sacred ritual and dogma, and relinquished this right only when their ceremonial objects were stolen by the men. There is also an "outside" or secular song-cycle dealing with the ordinary adventures of these two sisters, which is sung in the camp and to which women dance.

But the carved figures illustrated here are used as *'rayga* objects, in the same way as the sacred *'maraiin* painted and feathered-string-decorated poles of *'Djaŋgɐwul*. These are kept in a temporary storehouse out near the dancing ground, and shown to fully initiated men.[14] The original artist who has made the figure enters the hut; outside, the postulants are sitting or standing with faces turned away. The song-man begins to clap his sticks and the others are led up to look upon the sacred object. Finally, when the singing is completed, the designs on the figure are explained and discussed. At times, during the showing of the object, the figure may be held ritually by an actor who writhes on the ground like the python who swallowed the sisters.

What the *'Djaŋgɐwul* is to the *'dɐ:a*, *'Laintʃuŋ*[15] is to the *'jiritʃa*: he is the most important of all the *'jiritʃa* Ancestral Beings, and is highly sacred. He came out of the sea, emerging from the waters like a giant stone from the receding tide, at *'Dɐ:wɔn'miliŋwu*, near Blue Mud Bay. His body bore variegated water-marks (*'ra:g*) that formed patterns. In the figure illustrated, the totemic designs (belonging to a number of *'jiritʃa* clans) painted on its body are water-mark patterns.

Now *'Barɔma*,[16] a *'jiritʃa* man, saw *'Laintʃuŋ* for the first time as he stood on the beach, leaning on a sacred *'ŋaŋga* yam stick, and was surprised to observe these watermarks.

[13] This with many details is an enactment of the above myth; i.e. in the *'dʒuŋgɐwɔn* and *'kunapipi*.

[14] Those who have gone through the *'Djaŋgɐwul* rituals.

[15] The name *'Laintʃuŋ* means "white cloud from the sea," signified by the white face in the figure illustrated.

[16] Called also *'Bilmalandʒi*, derived from sacred beating sticks (called *'bilma*).

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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Marriage and Relationship

578 In the social life of the people polygamy is generally
595 practised, some men having as many as eight wives. While a good deal may be said in justification of this practice among a nomadic people, such as these aborigines are, it is a very fruitful cause of trouble and strife. This is occasioned by the jealousy which older wives frequently feel toward their younger tribal
[589] sisters, and also by the fact that, because of this system, many young men of marriageable age are unable to obtain partners. This latter fact, not unnaturally, leads to the stealing of women and general breaches of the moral laws of the tribe.

562 One, to us, highly unjust custom is to punish a woman who
627 has been stolen, even though she has been taken away by force,
672 much more severely than the man who has stolen her. In most
684 cases she is, when recovered, badly speared or beaten, in some cases so severely treated as to be killed, while the man who has taken her, unless he occupy a prohibited relationship to the woman, is usually let off with a severe lecturing.

627 Generally all the relatives of the wronged husband who are
684 present will join in this brutal chastisement of the woman, their action being justified by the fact that they "feel sorry" for their fellow-tribesman. Perhaps experience has proved the value of this method of controlling domestic relationships.

582 Marriage, as previously indicated, is regulated by the social
584 organisation of the tribe. There are only certain men of the opposite moiety who are eligible to become the husband of any particular girl or woman. To one of these men the girl is given in infancy, and, though this man has nothing directly to do with her until she reaches the age of puberty, he is required, during the years of her infancy and girlhood, to fulfil certain obligations, such as the making of presents of food, weapons or utensils, to her father.

[585] Because of this custom, there is nothing approaching a ceremony of marriage among these people, the girl during infancy as really belonging to the man as she will later on when he actually
587 takes her to wife. When a man dies, his wife or wives immediately
768 pass over to one or more of his tribal brothers, so that, excepting in the case of a few very old women, there are no widows, and there are no orphans in this aboriginal community.

114 as they came, making ritual-totemic wells or centres, and giving
773 birth to the ancestors of the present people. They made and carried
796 sacred totemic emblems, and instituted the Narra ritual in which these are used; but some Dreamtime men stole the baskets in which they kept these objects and performed the Narra—a theft which the Djunkgao took in good grace (pp. 336–40).

[114] As we read these myths and the description of the associated
773 rituals, we detect a difference, at least in emphasis, in the rôles played
562 by women in the creative epoch in this region as compared with other regions for which we have reliable information. According to the classic works of Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899) and *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904), and the later work of Carl Strehlow, *Die Aranda-und Loritja-Stamme in Zentral-Australien*, I, II and III, 1907, 1908, 1910, human beings arose from semi-human-animal forbears, or were given their forms in an operation performed by "self-existent" totemic beings on existing incomplete beings; and in some cases, too, in the more northern tribes, human beings just arose. There is no instance of one or two great culture-heroines being held responsible for natural features, tribes and languages, though women were included in many of the earliest groups of human wanderers; more explicitly the Unmatjera have a tradition of several groups of *ertwaininga* women who wandered across the country, carrying yamsticks, and leaving individuals behind at various spots, which became spirit totemic centres, from which these individuals went forth to be reincarnated.

In the sphere of ritual, however, the myths reflect a stage or period in which women took an active part and had full knowledge of sacred symbols. Thus, in one myth, three women from time to time painted themselves with sacred designs, carried the nurtunja (a sacred symbol), performed ceremonies and changed their totemic and subsection affiliations. In another, the Unthippa women in the course of their wanderings, used to carry off and circumcize any novices they found, an event to which reference is still made in circumcision ritual (*Native Tribes*, pp. 195–6, 433, 441–3; *Northern Tribes*, pp. 146, 150, 152–9).

171 If we compare the mythology of the centre and north-centre with
773 that of Arnhem Land as we knew it in 1937, we see that in both the
562 spirits of men and women pre-exist because of happenings in the
[774] Dreamtime, and women in that period played an inner rôle in what is now ritual reserved for initiated men. In the former vast regions, however, women did not form the country, name natural species, determine the tribal and linguistic divisions, nor institute ceremonies But this is just what the culture heroines of Arnhem Land were said to have done. This difference in power, or in degree of function, was sufficient to suggest further research in this region into the rôle of the

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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culture-heroine in mythology; and all the more so, as no such distinctively creative powers were ascribed to females in the myths of any other region then studied, such as the Kimberley Division of Western Australia, the Great Victoria Desert, North Queensland, nor South-East Australia. In the north-west and north-east of the continent, the important creative culture-heroes are males and many of them were at times in animal form. In the South-East not only was the male aspect dominant, but there was only one great hero, for each tribe or region, named here Bundjil, there Nurunderi, or Baiami or Gulambra or Goin and so on.*

In 1939 my friend, Mr. W. E. Harney, who had spent many years in and around Arnhem Land, and has a greater and sounder knowledge of Aboriginal custom, belief and ritual than any other layman sent me some notes in which much prominence was given to the "Old Woman," Kunapipi, both in doctrines and in ritual. After discussing the material with him, I was satisfied that in the Roper, Macarthur and Victoria River areas, a very vivid cult of the "mother-goddess" type was functioning. Her name varied, being Kunapipi, Mumuna, Kliarin-Kliari, and so on, but she was usually referred to as the "Old Woman" or the "Mother". She was the source of life in man and nature, both in the Dreamtime or creative past and now. In this activity she was associated with a great serpent, usually the Rainbow serpent, who "made the road" into the womb for the pre-existent spirits to be incarnated and reincarnated. She was also the very earth itself, that from which living things came and on which they depended for sustenance. This doctrine was expressed in the Kunapipi ritual. In it her womb was represented, by a trench into which the initiands were put, and from which they were reborn. In addition, the bullroarer, also representing her womb, when swung at the ritual became the sojourning symbol of each initiand's ritual or "wood" spirit. After the ceremony, when the Yermalindji, the symbol of the great snake, was burnt in the earth-womb, the bullroarer was buried there also. Thus, the lad's ritual "shade" remained in Kunapipi, and did so until the disintegration of the symbol, when

* I can speak from personal field work for all these regions except the north-east. See also articles in *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 46-62, R. Piddington, "Karadjeri Initiation". Vol. VI, No. 1, pp. 66-93, Ursula H. McConnel, "Myths of the Wikmunkan and Wiknatara Tribes"; *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, No. 4, pp. 452-477, Vol. VII, No. 1, pp. 69-105, "Totemic Hero Cults in the Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland"; Vol. IX, No. 4, pp. 382-404, A. Capell, "Mythology in Northern Kimberley". Vol. XIII, No. 3, pp. 255-260, and Vol. XIV, No. 1, pp. 31-53; "A Preliminary Report of Field Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia", by R. and C. Berndt, *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney, 1945.

Also D. F. Thomson, "The Hero Cult, Initiation and Totemism on Cape York", *Journal, Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXIII, pp. 453-538; and "Notes on a Hero Cult from the Gulf of Carpentaria, North Queensland", *op. cit.* Vol. LXIV, pp. 217-236. A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, pp. 475-508.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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which then has to be quickened. The coastal Arnhem Landers have had centuries of contact, and it may be that the usually accepted Aboriginal doctrine of conception has been modified here. In any case, granting the premises, the form in which they hold it is eminently logical.

Amongst the many other interesting points raised by the author is the vital significance of dreams, particularly for ritual and its interpretation. One of Mr. Berndt's important contributions to the anthropology of northern Arnhem Land is his systematic recording of dreams—a sign of the confidence put in him by the natives, and also a sign of the objectivity with which they regard dreams.

One last point: Mr. Berndt lays stress on the importance of the ritual rôle played by women in this region. He is correct in doing so. Though they are not on the "Mother Place", yet they are nearby playing their part, a part which stems from the Dreamtime, when the sacred ritual was theirs; and how else could it be, for life and birth is through the womb? A cult of the Great Mother would have no foundation apart from the women through whom her children must be born. Women here have their sacred aspect and sacred rôle.

The Author and the Field

Mr. R. M. Berndt was well equipped for doing research into the religion of Arnhem Land. After study in the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, he with his wife (Catherine H. Berndt), also an Anthropologist, did four years of field research amongst Aborigines in both tribal and detribalized conditions. This included about eighteen months on the south-west of Arnhem Land and on the border of the Kimberley Division of Western Australia, where he was introduced to the cult. In 1946 when the Australian National Research Council was able to make a further grant to these workers, we selected the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land as the main field. Research there would be complementary to what Dr. Warner had done eighteen years before; in addition it was an area subject to the spread of native customs and rites from both the west and the south, and was also likely to show some cultural effects arising from long contact with Macassans or others who visited the region to engage in marine industry. Finally, although a Mission had been operating at Yirrkalla for nearly ten years and an Air Force base had been established there during the war, causing some modification of native life, in particular, lessening the degree of nomadism, yet in spite of this, the fundamental drives and beliefs had not been affected. Men in the prime of life as well as the old men still belonged to the "old order". It was, therefore, still possible to study the native religion in its cultural and social setting as a functioning institution. Fortunately, I was able to assure myself of this during a visit and inquiries in the region in 1946.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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Several aspects should perhaps be mentioned in this *Preface*, since they throw new light on the study of Aboriginal religion. 121

Throughout the greater part of the Northern Territory the concept of a Fertility Mother is found. She is the direct or indirect inspiration of all religious thought and activity. She is the central theme of the Kunapipi ceremonies. Indeed, Kunapipi is one of her sacred names. Her "eternal" presence throws new light on the philosophy of totemism in the region, for it was she, herself without a totem, who brought the totems into being. Animals, birds, reptiles, Spirits, inanimate objects, physiographic features, became totemic through her divine influence and association, or because they served some purpose in relation to her "eternal" rôle of creator, cause of birth and rebirth and seasonal fluctuations. In the Kunapipi then, the totem bears the sacred imprint of its religious or mythological connection with the Mother. In this region, therefore, the study of totemism is a means to an end: and that end, where we have any detailed knowledge, is the Mother herself, existing as a divine Being serving as an explanation of religious thought, belief and behaviour. 771 776

This leads to the realm of the sacred, but the problem of the demarcation between the sacred and the profane, and of the part played by women in sacred ritual, particularly in the Kunapipi itself, needs to be considered far more intensively than is possible here.

Religious thought and action permeate the whole of an indigenous society, and are not manifested only on the sacred ceremonial ground when groups meet for the performance of ritual. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to separate the sacred from the profane. A man or woman does not receive sacred power directly or indirectly from the Sacred Mother only on the ceremonial ground, through the performance of ritual. He, or she, possesses innately a sacred or divine essence, which exists apart from any external coercion: whatever his or her degree of participation in the sacred collective rites, this personal germ of sacredness remains intact, and cannot be destroyed even by death. It seems probable however that this individual germ, which may perhaps be described as a person's own sacred aura, may be intensified on the occasion of religious ceremonies. The spirit of a man (or woman) is derived directly from the Sacred Mother; his bones themselves are possessed of a sacred quality, being likened to the *rangga* emblems associated with the great ancestral Beings; and he himself bears "inside" (sacred) and "outside" (secular) personal names, which are in many cases of sacred origin. 121 771 778 [774]

Women have a far greater part to play in sacred religious ceremonies than has hitherto been observed. This is particularly the case in north-eastern Arnhem Land; and in the performance of the Kunapipi they are directly responsible for the efficacy of a whole series of ceremonies. Because they do not take part in all the rituals of a particular cult, this does not mean that they are excluded or are 121 562 771 796

121 consequently irreligious. Woman, or more precisely her unique
562 ability to create, together with man's power to inseminate, has
771 become a feature of native religion in these areas, crystallized in the
796 concept of the Mother, whom we see manifested in (for instance) the
[831] Kunapipi. The aura thus surrounding, and radiating from, this
[776] Fertility Mother has been extended in some degree to native women to-day.

121 Another problem arising from the study of the Kunapipi cult
794 which needs detailed consideration, is that of individual origins.
773 Throughout the greater part of the Territory, specific cults have been
776 inspired either by one or, in some cases, by two or three Ancestral Beings. Through their own personality and power, it is said, they succeeded in indoctrinating the whole social group in which they found themselves. They brought with them what appear to have been new ideologies, with attendant ritual, emblems, songs, and mythology in which they themselves now play a dominant part. This individual aspect is apparent in the case of the Kunapipi Mother, who arose from the waters of the Roper River Mouth (*vide* Chapter XI), bringing with her the main features of what we now call the Kunapipi cult. The same principle is evident in the appearance of the Djanggawul (*vide* Chapter I) and of Laintjung (Chapter I) in north-eastern Arnhem Land; both these Beings appear to have inspired virile cults, substantiated by mythology which details their adventures, their activities and beliefs. The society itself, of course, must have been more or less receptive to the introduction of these religious beliefs. That is to say, the religious leader, whether Kunapipi,
[182] Laintjung or the Djanggawul Brother or Sisters, was able to impress his (or her) own point of view on that society, which in turn was willing to adopt his views and ideas, so giving social impetus to the introduced religion.

This aspect of individual origins, in relation to specific Australian Aboriginal cults, is an important one. The contention, which may be substantiated by mythology and the traditional song-cycles, is that a powerful personality—such as the Great Mother, the acknowledged spiritual leader and inspiration of the Kunapipi cult—possessed of ability beyond the ordinary, can and does exert his or her influence on the society in which he is either temporarily or permanently living; and that influence, helped by favourable circumstances, is sufficient to establish a cult which attracts adherents, and becomes in its own right an important social function and institution.

121 The migration of Ancestral Beings, like Kunapipi and others, into
771 a particular society, bringing with them a religious cult, is a fairly
773 general phenomenon in Aboriginal religious life. Major Ancestral
794 Beings very rarely arise in the country of the people with whom they
776 are mythologically associated, or in the society which serves as the "incubator" for their specific ideology. Rather, the individual (in

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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773 so it relates, the Djanggawul sisters themselves were the sole guard-
796 ians of the religious objects and associated ceremonies. They were well acquainted with all the sacred ritual and doctrine, because this intimately concerned them; the symbols they used, and their actions in dancing, made reference to the sexual act, to pregnancy and birth. Aboriginal men to-day speak definitely on this point: "Then we had nothing: no sacred objects, no sacred ceremonies, the women had everything." So one day, the myth continues, the men stole the women's objects while they were out collecting mussels; they took them back to their own camp, and there performed the special sacred dancing. The Djanggawul sisters, coming back with their shellfish, found that their *rangga* had disappeared. They heard, in the distance, the singing of the men; and finally they decided that perhaps it was just as well that the men had taken their *rangga*. It would save them a lot of trouble, they agreed; now the men could carry out most of the ritual for them, while they busied themselves chiefly with raising families and collecting food. In this way, their true function as Fertility Mothers became established. Such an attitude is not con-
[171] fined to north-eastern Arnhem Land, but appears in the mythology
● [562] of other Australian Aboriginal tribes. However, women still play an important part in sacred ritual, for instance in the Kunapipi.

This is a brief summary of the complete version, which gives in
616 detail the main theology of the *dua* moiety. To both *dua* and *jiritja*
796 men and women it is of major importance, for men of both moieties take part in the *dua nara* ceremonies, although *dua* men alone are the leaders, singers and principal dancers. The Djanggawul ritual is concerned with "higher" religious thought, and most of it with sacred dancing on a sacred ground where a *nara* "shade" or hut has been constructed. This hut represents the womb; in it the *rangga* are stored, and from it men emerge, to posture and dance ritually while holding them.

616 If the Djanggawul are important to the *dua*, Laintjung and his son
773 Banaitja are equally so to the *jiritja* group of clans who hold the *jiritja nara* ceremonies. The Male Ancestral Beings Laintjung and Banaitja, with certain female counterparts, dominate *jiritja* religious ideology; but their mythology is not nearly so vivid as that of the Djanggawul, nor are their ceremonies so important. Laintjung came from the sea near Blue Mud Bay, and established his cult. There, and at nearby places, he distributed sacred totemic designs to *jiritja* clans; he had also brought with him sacred *rangga*, the *jiritja* "high" totems, which he gave into the custody of the clans. Although much
[188] of the Laintjung ritual also relates to the increase of the natural species, most is only indirectly related to fertility.

When his father died, Banaitja desired to broaden and put into practice some of Laintjung's religious concepts; but his efforts aroused general antagonism, and at last he was put to death. Later,

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CHAPTER III

MYTHOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE KUNAPIPI

The myth that substantiates Kunapipi ritual in this north-eastern region is thus concerned with the two Wauwalak sisters; and this same myth (as mentioned in Chapter I *c*) serves to explain two other indigenous rituals, the age-grading *djunggawon* ceremony, and the "higher" religious ritual of *ngu:rlmak*. Each of these three ceremonies, the *djunggawon*, the *kunapipi* and the *ngu:rlmak*, emphasizes some particular feature of this myth. But at the same time, to understand thoroughly the Kunapipi ritual and symbolism it is necessary to be acquainted with the complete Wauwalak myth. Even then, certain aspects must be interpreted, according to Aboriginal explanations, before their meaning can become apparent. Traditional symbolism in ritual, through long years of constant repetition, becomes so stylized that the original intent is sometimes obscured; it is often necessary, therefore, to interpret on the basis not only of mythology, but also of comparison with similar actions and symbols in other regions. However, in this small study we are concerned not so much with theoretical analysis, as with recording the structure and basis of the cult in this particular area, assisted by a glance at its expression in two neighbouring groups.

In north-eastern Arnhem Land, where most of the indigenous religious doctrine is expressed through the Djanggawul *dua* and the Laintjung-Ramaitja *jiritja* cycles, the Wauwalak series is not the most important. Again, to understand fully the importance of this concept of fertility it is necessary to realize the place of the Djanggawul Brother and Sisters in Yirrkalla sacred life, for they were responsible in the first place for the birth of the Wauwalak. The power of fructification, however, has been transmitted to the Two Wauwalak Sisters (*vide* Chapters I and II) with the introduction of the Kunapipi.

It is relevant to mention, in this context, that women play an important part in all sacred ritual in north-eastern Arnhem Land, where many of the rites are concerned with the reproductive function of womankind, and of female Ancestral (or Spirit) Beings. Women to-day are acquainted, although in many cases somewhat imperfectly, with the background of sacred ceremony and the underlying doctrines. Indeed, men stress the fact that in the Dreaming Period women initially possessed all sacred ritual, and lost it only through

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the men's duplicity. This is particularly apparent in the Djanggawul myth (*vide*, for example, Chapters I and IV). Merely because they do not join in certain of the most sacred mysteries, women do not feel "left out" of things, or pushed aside into what has been termed by some writers a profane existence, with attendant feelings of inferiority. On the contrary, they realize that they have a supplementary function in maintaining camp dancing, and answering the men's ritualistic calls from the sacred ground. It is necessary, for instance, that they prepare food for the men at such times, and observe certain tabus. A woman must know her own totemic clan songs, inherited from her father, and to a lesser extent those of her mother, and be able to sing them on appropriate occasions. She must know the correct dance movements and steps to accompany the men's singing in the "outside" ceremonies, as well as in the sacred rituals where she has her own part to play. There is no jealousy of the men's performances alone on the sacred ground. The men, so women say, are performing these ceremonies not only for themselves, but for all the people in general. This is simply a normal extension of the sexual division of labour and activity.

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* * * *

The story of the Wauwalak is rarely told in prose by a story-teller of this region. Usually it is transmitted from one group of men to another, through the generations, in ritual, accompanied by explanations, on the ceremonial ground. Moreover, the whole myth is related in the sacred "inside" Wauwalak cycle of some hundreds of songs, in two main series: the "inside" Bush cycle, and the "inside" seaside cycle, each describing in detail the adventures of the Sisters. There are also the "outside" (secular) Bush and seaside cycles, sung in the main camp to the dancing of women: these continue the story, and reveal many aspects of the myth. Each one of these songs is representative of the very best in native poetry,[1] which it is not possible to set down in the bare general translation presented here.

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The Wauwalak myth begins in a region usually unidentified (*vide* Chapter IX), said vaguely to be somewhere south in the "Bush". This means, perhaps, that the Wauwalak sisters came from the direction of the Roper River, the hypothetical home of the Kunapipi Mother and her two daughters, the Mungamunga. In any case, the Wauwalak came northwards at an early period, towards the mainland opposite the Crocodile Islands (that is, near Milingimbi), bringing with them the rituals of the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak*. Then the myth itself became to some extent localized in northern Arnhem Land. It is on the mainland south of Milingimbi that the most sacred totemic sites connected with the Wauwalak are found;

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1. This is reserved for a detailed study of the Wauwalak Cycle in relation to the *djunggawon* and *ngu:rlmak* ceremonies.

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with red ochre, and dance along in the same way as did the Wauwalak sisters. They reach and surround the *djepalmandji*, calling in answer to the sound of the bullroarers; all the male dancers are hidden about forty yards away in the bush. The women then leave the *djepalmandji* and sit in a bunch some few yards distant. The sound of the bullroarers continues, and the two *jiritja* men in the forked sticks cry out. All the women and children lie down, and are covered with *barakala* bark and *ngainmara* mats. When they have all settled down, the Kunapipi headman calls out for the male dancers, who enter the ground dancing in single file and calling out *wa ! wa ! wa !* This is the call of the *dua matju* flying fox; it is used theoretically to "trick" the women into thinking that something else is meant, "but really the cry belongs to the two Wauwalak sisters; for they cried out *kei'wa ! kei'wa ! kei'wa !* when they were frightened of Julunggul coming towards their camp". That is to say, the cry *kei'wa !* is used only by women, and men cannot use it. As one informant said, "we can't yell out like women, or we might have to change our business (sacred ritual) for women's business, and they would take over ours. So we make ourselves flying fox, and then change the cry to *wa !* bnt all the same it is the Two Sisters crying out".

"What side is this?" the women are said to wonder, covered with their *ngainmara*: "Flying fox side?" "But," the men continue, "they can't get the meaning of what we do." (This, of course, is a peculiarly male attitude.)

The same men add, "But really we have been stealing what belongs to them (the women), for it is mostly all woman's business; and since it concerns them it belongs to them. Men have nothing to do really, except copulate, it belongs to the women. All that belonging to those Wauwalak, the baby, the blood, the yelling, their dancing, all that concerns the women; but every time we have to trick them. Women can't see what men are doing, although it really is their own business, but we can see their side. This is because all the Dreaming business came out of women—everything; only men take 'picture' for that Julunggul. In the beginning we had nothing, because men had been doing nothing; we took these things from the women". This latter is a particularly interesting statement, reiterated in the Djanggawul Myth cycle, which stresses peculiarly female attainments: the power of reproduction, and the phenomenon of menstruation.

The dancing men run forward, cry out, and run forward again until they reach the *djepalmandji*; then they surround it, and the covered women and children. The two *jiritja* men in the forks cry out "like that Wauwalak child, to awaken the two sisters in their hut" (that is, the cry is supposed to awaken the women who are covered with the *ngainmara*). The men all carry spears and dance around the women, prodding them lightly with the shafts, so that they "awaken" and sit up, and look towards the *djepalmandji*. They

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773 tence and immutability of the "eternal" Beings, a religious philos-
796 ophy has been developed among the mature "thinkers" of the group.
789 This finds its outlet in the mental exercise of meditation, interpre-
794 tation, and explanation, but is nevertheless restricted by the deep faith that is a living part of all its manifestations. Within the limitation of defined premises, a certain degree of flexibility is apparent; philosophic concepts have not remained static, nor ideology stagnant. Throughout the centuries of religious development, alien ideas
[177] have been considered and discussed, even when they were unorthodox, and apparently opposed to indigenous theology. They have been accepted or discarded; but all have, in this way, served to illuminate and extend the basic principles which serve to explain to the aborigines man's place in his environment, and his inter-relationship with the "Divine" Beings who are possessed of the power of animation and are the seat of knowledge.

796 Several interesting points are raised in our description of Kunapipi ritual.

In all Kunapipi ceremonies, throughout the whole region mentioned in Chapter II, basic words referring to the sacred objects, ceremonies, and so on, are very much the same; for instance,
[184] *nanggaru*, *kanala*, *jelmalandji*, *djamala*, *gumagu*, and *djepalmandji*. These terms serve as a connecting link, for their meanings do not change drastically from one area to another, even when, as at Yirrkalla, the Kunapipi ritual itself has been superimposed on a relatively indigenous theme. The dominating theory behind the Kunapipi has preserved, more or less intact, its original intent.

562 Another outstanding aspect is the important rôle undertaken by
796 women throughout the performance of the Kunapipi ceremonies. At no time do they feel themselves secluded from purely male activity, while at intervals they take an active part. They know that the rituals are principally concerned with peculiarly feminine functions, and that men are carrying out the more strenuous features of ceremonial life. "These rituals," said one informant, "are just like a man copulating with a woman, he does all the hard working so that the woman can carry out the really important business of childbirth." This may be a one-sided attitude, but it does adequately express local native reasoning in this matter. The question of whether women are profane, as opposed to the aura of sacredness pervading a male participant at such a ceremony, does not enter into Yirrkalla thinking. Even when ritually tabu because of afterbirth or
[241] menstruation blood (as in the case of the Wauwalak at the sacred Muruwul billabong), a woman is regarded as sacred, for her blood and her other activities themselves are sacred, and are focal points in the religious doctrine. And all sacred ceremony, these aborigines
[773] say, was inspired by women. "In the beginning men had nothing, and women possessed all the ritual; so men stole this from the women ..."—(Djanggawul and Wauwalak mythology).

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. . ." — (Djanggawul and Wauwalak mythology). In any case, a cult such as the Kunapipi, which stresses fertility and reproduction, could not exclude women; as is normal in these matters, a certain sphere of ceremonial activity is allotted to each sex, while the women realize the important part played by their divine counterpart, the Wauwalak. 562 796 794

In the Kunapipi, however, women enter the sacred ground of the men; this is a feature that rarely occurs in the ceremonies associated with other cults. Upon entering the ground, the women themselves become more definitely *marelin* (sacred); "they take over from the men, and dance before them as if the men were only novices being introduced to their first sacred rituals". They re-enact something of what they themselves initially possessed in the mythological period, and what was stolen by the men. They use the sacred symbol of Julunggul, and the tree that was split by his lightning, and through their actions they represent the origin of the men's sacred bullroarer which no woman is supposed to see. They dance the ritual of the great Python, "and the men hang their heads in fear".[17]

On the termination of this ceremony, the women dance the lewd bandicoot dance on the sacred ground before the men, expressing symbolically the basic intent of the Kunapipi. They are stimulating both themselves and the men in order to carry out sexual intercourse, for copulation is the means by which fertility is achieved.

This brings us to an aspect that cannot be considered in detail here; that is, the problem of religious sexuality.[18] By this we mean the degree in which sex, as a stimulatory factor, enters into Kunapipi ritual. In most sacred aboriginal cult life, where sexual subjects are dealt with frankly and freely, there is no suggestion of actual individual stimulation, or of arousing the sexual inclinations of the participants: the ritual merely re-enacts some specific aspect of mythology which is related to erotic activity or coitus, and which is necessary for its effective completion, and for achieving the desired intent. The actors only carry out the symbolism associated with sexual activity. The arousing of sexual desire by sacred acting of this type would project into it a profane and irreligious content that would immediately detract from its real intent. Allowance for sexual stimulation by dancing, acting and singing has been made in the case of love magic ritual, or of collective male and female secular ceremonies that heighten sexual feelings and permit licence. 794 796 831 [832] [786]

17. This ceremony held by the women is similar to their secret magico-religious rituals in central-western Northern Territory. It is one aspect of the *tjarada*, which has its sacred and secular expressions. From these secret rituals of the women, men are traditionally, and in present practice, excluded. *Vide* C. H. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, L'Homme, Cahiers d'Ethnologie, de Geographie et de Linguistique, 1, Paris, 1950, pp. 1-85, text figs. See particularly Chapter V. [184] [113]
18. *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Section XII.

Significance of the Djanggawul

preliminary to pregnancy. Children in this area, for instance, are called *jutu* (*jutu*, usually employed in a singular sense), or *djamarguli* (plural). The former word means 'semen'; that is, the child originated from the semen. The latter means 'through (or from) work'; to 'work' (*djama*) a female is to have coitus, and *djamarguli* is literally the 'result of working (or coitus)'.

Erotic references, then, in the Djanggawul cult merely conform to the accepted pattern. To say that the Aborigine is concerned unduly with the subject of sex, and derives a morbid satisfaction from constant direct or symbolic reference to it, it to distort the actual position. He is frankly interested in the workings of the human body, and in the satisfaction of its basic needs; and he recognizes the fundamental importance of the act, not only in ensuring the continuation of life, but also in helping to stabilize relations between members of both sexes, through their very interdependence. It is not unexpected, therefore, to find manifestations of this interest in Aboriginal religious emblems and mythology, ritual and song. Indeed, what more obvious means of expression could a simple group of people have? Here, in the Djanggawul doctrine, are crystallized their hopes and desires, related to their fundamental drives, co-ordinated with the natural resources and phenomena and with the environment which they know.

Numerous references are made to the removal of the *rangga* from the *ngainmara*, a symbolic allusion also to the removal of children from the wombs of the Sisters: for *rangga* are likened to children, or human beings, and men and women may use this term to refer to their bones. The spiritual content of the bones is the same as that of the sacred *rangga*, and has, moreover, been passed on from their ancestors—those who were originally removed from the Sisters. When, for example, postulants enter the sacred hut (= *ngainmara* = uterus) on the ritual ground, they are like *rangga* being hidden away within the *ngainmara*. In a polygynous marriage, too, the wives are said to be like *rangga*: their husband has collected them into a group, and has a monopoly over them as a man has over his individual *rangga*. This likening of women to sacred *rangga* is interesting, but probably derives from the fact that women themselves are said to be the source of ritual knowledge,[1] and consequently sacred.

There is much stress, too, on the maternal qualities of the Djanggawul Sisters, although the Brother himself is of considerable importance. The Two Sisters are mentioned far more frequently, particularly in the Milingimbi version of the cycle, although this

[1] *Vide* Chapters 2 and 3. (See also M. Mead, *Male and Female*, London, 1950, pp. 102–3.)

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Significance of the Djanggawul

796 Warner has already set out briefly something of the procedure in this *nara* ritual;[1] although his descriptions are based on observation of these twenty-one years ago, to-day they appear to have been little changed. Although in this volume we are not concerned primarily with the ritual expressions of the Djanggawul myth and songs, it is nevertheless necessary to present briefly the sequence of the ritual and its significance. This will throw the rest of our material into relief, and serve to accentuate basic meanings.[2]

a. The sacred ground is formed, the shade constructed, and various members and ceremonial leaders of the *dua* groups prepare the *rangga* emblems. (See above.) The shade of branches on a framework of wood symbolizes the *ngainmara* or uterus of either Djanggawul Sister (it is said to signify, in one, the uteri of both the younger and older Sisters). The initiates themselves are symbolically *rangga*, or 'the Children of the Sisters'; they represent too the Brother and his companions (who were themselves the Sisters' children). The ground is also a projection of the uterus concept.

The first dances are always those relating to the rise and fall of the surf, and the sound of the sea. These refer to the Djanggawul's paddling across the sea from Bralgu to Port Bradshaw, and are treated in the myth and songs. At intervals throughout this dancing, and during all the *nara* ceremonies, invocations (*bugali*) are called. These, by the terms used, bring into perspective relevant sections of what is being enacted. Furthermore, they are thought to create an aura of sacredness, by spiritually conjuring up the Djanggawul themselves, and their pervading power. All *bugali* invocations are made up of sacred 'inside' words,[3] and numerous examples exist in the song cycles (see, for example, textual material treated separately in Volume 2 of this work). The same participants leave the ground and enter the main camp, and again call out invocations within the hearing of all. Women are said not to know the hidden meanings, but are quite well aware of much of their significance: 796 ● 562 *vide* Djanggawul myth relating to the loss of the *rangga* and bags by the Sisters. Women feed the men, who then return to the sacred ground. The rôle of the women during this part, and during the whole ritual series, is to provide participants and postulants with food: traditionally, this is cycad palm nut 'bread', supplemented by a variety of edible meats, vegetables and fruits. This is in accordance with the rôle undertaken by the Two Sisters after their

[1] *op. cit.*, pp. 340-36.

[2] Full descriptions of the *dua nara* will be presented later. Compare the differences between these rituals and those associated with the *kunapipi*: *vide Kunapipi*, Chapter IV.

[3] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 341: this writer calls these 'power' names.

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sacred possessions were lost, a rôle which before this loss belonged to the men.

The sequence of the preceding ritual depends on the completion of the many *rangga*, the availability of men and neophytes, the abundance of red ochre and parakeet breast feathers, and the amount of food collected by the women. Although much of the latter is collected throughout the ceremonies, cycad 'bread' is stored, and its preparation commences weeks before the first rituals begin.

Just after the first ceremonies, people from other groups come to the main camp where the *nara* is being held. They have been summoned by specially designed message sticks, feathered string, or miniature copies of *rangga* objects moulded from wild honey wax. Ideally, at this point, all the *rangga* should be ready; but in practice, painting of the objects usually continues for some time, and visitors make and paint additional emblems. All these *rangga* relate to various features of the Djanggawul myth: the *rangga* brought by the Djanggawul; representations of the Djanggawul themselves, or their separate organs; natural phenomena; or totemic objects and species associated with the Djanggawul. Incidentally, the majority of the dances enact something of the behaviour of totemic species, and are carried out with the *rangga*.

When initially, at the onset of the ritual, the *rangga* are removed from the water or mud they are said to be like, firstly, *rangga* removed from the *nguinwara*, and secondly, children removed from the Sisters' wombs. Placing one's arm (or hand) into the water or mud to remove the *rangga* is like the Djanggawul Brother's inserting his hand into the vaginae of the Sisters to remove the children. The sacred clan patterns drawn with ochres on the objects are derived from water marks, which the Djanggawul's original *rangga* acquired during their journey in the bark canoe from Bralgu. Alternatively, these patterns symbolize 'womb marks' on a new-born child. Ochre is symbolic of blood, or the sun's rays, or the warmth of a fire: blood from afterbirth, rays of sun from the *duga* vagina disc of the sun, and fire (warmth) from the sun. The red breast feathers of the parakeet are symbolic of the sun's rays, of blood, or of an umbilical cord. The reiteration of dancing associated with the sea in every case signifies the great importance of the Djanggawul's landing at Jelangbara, which is one of the most sacred sites associated with these Beings. The singing of water from the sacred waterholes refers to these Beings inserting their *rangga*, and removing them so that water will gush forth; this is symbolic of coitus, and the rise of water is the flow of semen which fertilized both human beings and the earth. It represents, too, the

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113 Dadawi linguistic groups. The Djanggawul eventually reached this place and made a camp, putting many dreamings there. They made a fish trap and caught many fish to eat. They also put the wild banana palm, and Djanggawul with his *manwulan ranggo* poked holes in the ground from which water flowed.

After a time they left Ngaluwi, walking along until they reached Gulugboi(wi), where they made a big 'shade'. They pushed their *djinda* into the ground, and trees sprang forth; and they put the *banggada* plants there.

At Daramur (or Darar'woi), inland from Arnhem Bay, the Djanggawul saw a *djanda* goanna in a fresh-water swamp that was covered with wild banana *daru* leaves; this was in Ngeimil territory.

Farther on at Mingu well, also in Ngeimil country, a *djanda* emerged from an open well which contained partially submerged banana foliage: new shoots had come up, completely covering the surface of the water.

Passing on to Djaddjananggu (also Ngeimil), they found a swamp where they saw *warugai* or *marabinj* fish; here too they saw lily roots and foliage, with flowers, and many ducks. Close by was the Maijulwi billabong where the *dadaw* lily, with its round edible bulbs, was growing in great profusion. The Djanggawul Brother [178 himself declared part of Maijulwi sacred, so that to-day only two ●562] tracks, one at each side, lead down to its banks; women may go down one of these only to get water, and must always return by the same road.

Continuing on, the Djanggawul reached Nganmaruwi, where they erected another large 'shade'. During all the time they had been on the Australian mainland, there is no mention of the Brother's having coitus with his Sisters; but while they were living here, he said to Bildjiwuraroiju, 'I want to copulate with you, Sister.'

But the elder Sister was shy. 'Why?' she asked him.

'I want to put a few people in this place,' the Brother replied.

So he lifted her clitoris, and inserted his long penis. He did the same with Miralaidj. So they continued living there, and he copulated as a husband does with his wives.

After some time, Bildjiwuraroiju became pregnant, and her Brother said to her, 'Sister, may I have a look at you?'

'What for?' she asked.

'Because I want to put some people in this place.'

'All right,' she replied. She opened her legs a little, resting her clitoris on her left leg. The Brother sat before his Sister and placed his index finger into her vagina, up to the first joint.[1] Then he

[1] Tip of finger, *durir*; from tip to first joint, *durirbulungun*.

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The Content of the Myth

773 776 182 society of north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Land, which places considerable stress on female fertility among both human beings and natural species.

On the whole, however, the Djanggawul are very much like ordinary mortals. They depend on natural resources for food and sustenance; they must walk in order to traverse the country, and use canoes to cross the sea and rivers; they enjoy the satisfaction of coitus, the warmth of the sun and of fire; they sing and perform ritual. Moreover, their super-human powers do not seem to avail them when forced to alter their direction because of a *jiritja* moiety dreaming, or to move their camp, as in the case of the *jiritja* spring water at Elcho Island; or in the case of sorcery, as when Miralaidj was killed. The myth, then, deals with Beings whose behaviour, although they are super-human, approximates that of ordinary man. The myth is correlated with a way of life that the Aborigines know and appreciate, and consequently has a greater hold on their emotions; it involves a faith of which the adherents include all members of the society. The sacred aura of the Djanggawul extends over man, woman and child, bringing them all within the sphere of its religious expression, as manifested in the songs and the ritual.

773 182 562 [826] Another feature is the segregation of the sexes when, in the myth, female children are placed under the *ngainmara* mat, and male children in the coarse grass. This reflects the Aborigine's assumption that man's rôle in life is rough, his activities are more strenuous than those of women, he takes the initiative in fighting, and altogether carries out the heavier work. His skin too is coarser, from his original exposure by the Djanggawul, while the contact with grass resulted in his growing facial hair. Women, on the other hand, were handled with greater care, protected from the harsh glare of the sun, from the rough ground and the grass. Because of this initial treatment, they are supposed to-day to be soft and yielding, with no facial and the minimum of body hair; and they are not, in theory, expected to carry out strenuous work. In reality, however, they are not the demure and submissive creatures idealized in this section of the myth. When the occasion demands, they can undertake equally difficult and strenuous activities, and possibly have greater endurance than men over a period. Nevertheless, the myth implies that they should in some measure conserve their strength to expend in sexual intercourse and childbearing. This twofold distinction between the sexes, on both physical and psychological grounds, is fundamental in local thought, with important effects on expected and actual behaviour. It is most interesting that we should find it expressed, in these terms, in a myth which purports to offer explanations of basic drives in Aboriginal society.

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The Content of the Myth

The rôle of women in sacred ritual receives attention in that section of the myth which describes their losing to the men the sacred dilly bags and *rangga* emblems. This has considerable bearing on the concept of what is rightly sacred and what profane; the theory that women are profane because they do not take an active part in many religious ceremonies has been the subject of much discussion.[1] Although it is not the place here to discuss the question in any detail, a few points are worthy of notice.[2]

The north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Landers' conception of sacred life, as mentioned, encompasses all members of the society, irrespective of sex. The 'aura' of religion, as they know it, permeates all cultural institutions, from the most simple or mundane to the most complex. According to the Djanggawul ideology woman, in the shape of the Two Djanggawul Sisters, was the source of all religious ritual, a fact which becomes apparent after studying the symbolism of the songs. At the same time, man's complementary part must not be underestimated. It might be suggested that because to-day the myth and associated ritual, with the songs, are now largely in the possession of men, the peculiar reproductive function of females has been more strongly stressed. It is reasonable to suspect, also, that if the Djanggawul had not lost their bag and *rangga* emblems, so that all ritual had remained in the hands of women while men continued to play a subordinate part, the emphasis would have been on the procreative abilities of the male sex.[3]

It is possible to conjecture that, by and large, members of one sex would be more intensely interested in the procreative and sexual function of the opposite sex than in their own. Whether or not the stress on female fertility was an 'original' manifestation,

[1] *Vide* B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 1938, p. 464; P. Kaberry, *Aboriginal Women, Sacred and Profane*, 1939; C. H. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, L'Homme, Cahiers d'Ethnologie, de Géographie et de Linguistique, I, Paris, 1950.

Émile Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 1926, acknowledged that women's part in Aboriginal sacred life was greater than his direct references would imply (p. 138, footnote 6).

[2] *Vide* A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, 1950, pp. 28–33, and R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapters I *e*, III and IV.

[3] *Vide* M. Mead, *Male and Female*, London, 1950, pp. 102–3, in respect of some New Guinea tribes. 'The basic theme of the initiatory cult . . . is that women, by virtue of their ability to make children, hold the secrets of life. Men's rôle is uncertain undefined . . . man has hit upon a method of compensating himself for his basic inferiority . . . Behind the cult lies the myth that in some way all of this (ritual behaviour) was stolen from the women . . . men owe their manhood to a theft . . .' This is a particularly interesting thesis, which would repay further detailed attention.

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The Content of the Myth

as the myth would tend to explain, it is now almost impossible to tell. We can say, however, that on the authority of the myth, the ritual and the songs, together with certain emphases and attitudes current in contemporary Arnhem Land society, it does seem that the source of this religion may be found in female fertility. At the same time the peculiar function of the male, in the sexual act and in procreation, is treated in much symbolic detail. Summing up the relevant treatment of male and female in the Yirrkalla version of the Djanggawul myth, we arrive at the conclusion that both played an equally important part. In the Milingimbi version of the same myth, however, woman's part is stressed to such an extent that the Djanggawul Brother makes no appearance at all in the story.[1]

In the myth the Djanggawul Brother and his companions brazenly stole the bags and *rangga* from the Sisters, offering no compensation in return. Their separate rôles were then automatically reversed, so that women instead of men were obliged to collect food. The crux of the situation, however, is apparent from the remarks made by the Sisters immediately after their ritual exclusion. 'We know everything. We have really lost nothing, for we remember it all, and we can let them have that small part. For aren't we still sacred, even if we have lost the bags? Haven't we still our uteri?' This is still the attitude of the women.[2] Woman herself is still sacred—not merely her procreative organs, her menstrual and afterbirth blood,[3] but herself as a member of the female sex. She did not contest the action of the Djanggawul men because her rôle in society is conventionally one of submissiveness, arising from her treatment when removed from the Djanggawul Sisters' uteri.

However, the whole problem of respective male and female sacredness is too complex for the cursory attention which is all it can receive here. To examine it in detail, from the point of view of north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Land society, would necessitate the presentation of the Wauwalak Song Cycle, an examination of *kunapipi*, *ngurlmag* and *djunggawon* rituals,[4] and a

[1] Milingimbi version to be presented later. *Vide*, for example, L. Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 336–40.

[2] My wife's work among Yirrkalla and Milingimbi women bears out this statement. Their knowledge of sacred ritual is far more extensive than we have been led to believe, while their active participation is far from insignificant. The same holds good for certain other areas, for example, western Arnhem Land and Central-Western Northern Territory. See C. H. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, *op. cit.*, 1950.

[3] There is a cultural stress on these features in Arnhem Land society. See *Kunapipi*, Chapter III.

[4] This has been treated briefly in *Kunapipi*, especially Chapter III.

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discussion of contemporary behaviour and attitudes. Nevertheless, it is one of the most important issues raised in the myth, and fundamental in our conception of Arnhem Land religion. By admitting the place of women in ritual life, we extend the function of religion so that it is not solely, or even partially, the prerogative of man. Each sex has its definite and traditionally defined rôle; and by accepting this premise we realize the potential greatness of a faith which has meaning for all the members of the society.

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songs express what may be described as the spiritual quality of this particular Aboriginal society. They are essentially traditional, and have developed within the society as the result of group rather than of conscious or acknowledged individual effort. The individual is thus subordinated to the social conscience, in that he becomes the instrument through which they are transmitted, and through which they continue to live. The fact that he may add something to them in the course of transmission is not, here, a significant factor in this process: for if their inherent 'power', or their sacred aura, is to remain, they must retain what is felt to be their original structure in recognizable form. In this lies their essential value as documents of social thought and religious belief. Being predominantly traditional, they stem from the past; and because the concept of the 'Eternal Dreaming' is a living reality in Aboriginal life, these songs continue to retain at least the main ingredients (or what people themselves regard as the main ingredients) of their original content. Moreover, their oral transmission has been associated with special rhythms and ritual postures, and with accompanying dances, providing means of expression for the sacred thought and emotion not merely of one but indeed of many generations of Aborigines.

The Djanggawul songs and mythology comprise a body of knowledge which is not restricted, in the sense of being available to only one section of the community, but is shared by all adults and (to a much lesser extent) children. For practical purposes, a distinction is made between, on the one hand, the executive authority wielded by the men, and on the other, the more submissive participation of the women. Women know the content and rhythms of the songs, but 'officially' they are not supposed to know the ritual or the sacred invocations, or to see the *rangga* emblems. Generally speaking, however, they do know more about these than would be suspected from conversations with men alone. A number of women have described to my wife, in confidence, various features of the rituals performed exclusively and 'secretly' by men. They have described the *rangga* emblems, and told her many of the sacred terms used in invoking. An explanation of this lies in the Aborigines' concept of sacredness, which is not restricted to the confines of the ceremonial ground. It is, on the contrary, widely diffused throughout the society, and appears to permeate every institution and activity of the people. Women, as we have seen, by virtue of their childbearing ability as symbolized by the womb, possess a special sacred quality peculiar to themselves, in which men may not share. However important man may be—and the indispensable part he plays in conception receives much attention in the Djanggawul epic—woman has the more spectacular

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rôle, and the miracle of childbirth is hers alone. Upon that simple but fundamental thesis much of this traditional epic is based.

Woman's participation in the *dua nara* is thus both logical and necessary. Each sex, however, has its own part to play; and the Djanggawul cycle has indicated not only the physical but also the culturally defined ritual differences between men and women.

In this volume, when describing the beliefs and practices associated with the Djanggawul cycle and the performance of *nara* ritual, we have purposely employed the term cult. This does not mean, however, that it is controlled or shared by a select group, the acceptance of members within the order being determined by totemic, clan or linguistic group affinities, by status, prestige or economic position. This is not so. The Djanggawul cult is one of a number existing contemporaneously in this region, each having its own mythology and associated ceremonies. All these cults are in some degree interrelated, and all male members of the society are eligible as active participants. Boys and young men pass automatically through the age-grading ceremonies of the *djunggawon*, *kunapipi* and *ngurlmag*. In addition to these, there are certain revelatory rituals, which are not initiatory. The extent of a man's active participation in the latter, and his eligibility for leadership, depend upon several factors—for example, on his moiety and kinship affiliations, and on whether or not the cult's mythology and ritual belong to his particular linguistic group or clan, and to his father's family. Such factors, however, never operate to debar him altogether, and in many cases his relationship to the cult through his mother's family may have a compensatory effect. The same conditions apply in the case of the major religious cults, the *dua* and *jiritja* moiety *nara*. All men may be accepted as initiands to the *nara* ceremonies, and all may subsequently become neophytes; but the measure of their active participation and leadership depends on the factors mentioned above. Only a *dua* moiety man, belonging to the most powerful *dua* linguistic group and clan, can rise to ceremonial headmanship in the *dua nara*; and here, too, the principle of descent may operate. The writer's main informants in recording and discussing the Djanggawul songs, mythology and so on were *dua* headmen, assisted by other men who were correspondingly 'graded' in the ritual sphere.

Comparison of the myth (Chapter 2) with the Songs reveals certain inconsistencies. These may perhaps stem from the fact that the myth is an over-all sketch of the Djanggawul's journey and adventures; it allows rather more latitude and scope to individual narrators, and does not purport to describe various incidents in any great detail. On the whole, it does agree basically with the Songs; but

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minimized. Moreover, the constant repetition, which serves to impress on listeners the main features of the Songs, has a similar effect upon the singers themselves. An important device where transmission is entirely oral, with no visual aids except the sacred objects employed in the rituals, it also helps to ensure that the essential outline of the Songs is handed on from one generation to another. With the myth, however, it is rather a different matter. The myth is never narrated consecutively as a story, and there is no accompanying check of song and ritual. It is told in fragments, so to speak, to explain certain physiographical features, elements of social behaviour, or ritual activities; or brief extracts from it may be cited in the course of relevant discussion. The myth as related in this volume is composite, and represents a synthesis of several versions.

In some points, the myth as told by women does not conform to that told by men. Essentially, however, all the versions are in agreement. Women, too, stress the long penis of the Brother and clitorises of the Sisters; the stealing of the basket and *ramggi*, and leadership of the *nara* rituals; the association with the sun and with the *lindaridj* parakeet; and the sacredness of menstrual and after-birth blood. They are inclined to emphasize the powers of the Two Sisters at the expense of the Brother, and to credit them with creating and leaving the most important animal and vegetable foods for the benefit of the Aborigines who were to follow them. The important childbearing rôle of the Djanggawul Sisters, setting the pattern which women follow to-day, is said to have been introduced by themselves. Before this, among the spirit people inhabiting the land, women would select babies from the many to be found sitting among the foliage of the cycad palms, and take them back to camp to be breast-fed by the men. Women, it is said (with a certain amount of rationalization), were too busy with sacred ritual to attend to the bearing and rearing of children. The Djanggawul, however, started the practice of child-bearing as it is now known, and were the True Mothers of the Aboriginal race in this region.

Let us turn now to a review of the Song Cycle as it is presented here.

In Part One the Djanggawul leave Bralgu, the Island of Spirits, to which they had come from somewhere further across the sea. The Songs emphasize the fact that this was the place from which they voyaged to the Australian mainland. The Morning Star, too, was sent from Bralgu, and from there rose the sun, the influence of which is felt throughout the cycle: for, as mentioned in Chapters 1 to 3, the Djanggawul Sisters

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533 These factors obviously centre about the survival of the Aborig-
539 inal social group, and in that respect they suggest an important
sociological attitude. The Djanggawul Sisters, through their
831 perpetual pregnancy, and their ability to produce great numbers of
rangga folk, the ancestors of the present-day Aborigines, express
their true function as Fertility Mothers. They define the physical
differences between males and females, between the *rangga* and the
mat; expressing this symbolically, they put the *rangga* boys who
emerge from their wombs into the coarse grass, the *rangga* girls
into the shelter of the *ngainmara*-uterus mat. By stressing the sacred-
ness of womankind, this Aboriginal culture has enshrined mother-
hood, for it is realized that the continuity of the group is dependent
primarily, and in a more spectacular way, on the female. To ensure
this fertility, however, 'that the *rangga* within the *ngainmara* may
remain plentiful', the contribution of the virile male is essential.
The myth, therefore, acknowledges both physiological paternity
and maternity. The *rangga* is as sacred as the *ngainmara*; and in-
semination (symbolically expressed in a variety of forms) is a
biological necessity in the fertility sequence of coitus, conception,
pregnancy and childbirth.

533 Two other important features receive attention in this cycle.
539 The first, and perhaps the more important from a sociological
point of view, is the division of labour between the sexes. The
462 Djanggawul Sisters lose their sacred basket or dilly bag and *rangga*
emblems, and the men take over control of the *nara* ritual. Now
the Sisters must grind the cycad nut to make 'bread'; their 'hands
must be whitened with its flour'. This mythological incident
indicates, symbolically, the present division of activities between
the sexes. It is not a question of any alteration in woman's status:
● [562] she is not subordinated, or relegated to an 'inferior' position. On
the contrary, stress is placed on the complementary nature of their
activities. Woman must not resemble man, any more than man
may resemble woman, the essential nature and implications of each
(apart from biological factors) being culturally determined; hence
the clitoris of each Sister is cut, so that it may not resemble a man's
penis. Man may not be idle, merely collecting and preparing food
while woman performs all sacred ritual, possesses all the *rangga*
emblems and in addition carries out her important task of pro-
ducing children. If women are to ensure the continuity of the
group through childbearing, then men must perform the sacred
ritual and do the more strenuous work; for this reason, so we are
told, the men stole from the Sisters the sacred basket and *rangga*
633 and took charge of the *nara* ritual.
639 The second feature is the institution of the sacred *nara* ritual,

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However, they wanted the trade goods that these people could provide, and so they made an effort to adjust themselves to this new type of contact and to take up again the old traditional form of trading to which they were accustomed.

But they soon found that conditions had changed. These strangers brought with them Aborigines from other areas, and preferred to exploit the wealth of marine products themselves, using relatively few of the local people. This, of course, restricted the distribution of trade goods which they had expected to receive in payment for their work. Large scale trading was curtailed and was almost entirely replaced by individual bartering. This led to general resentment and dis-satisfaction.

They discovered, too, that although these Japanese and Europeans required native women for sexual purposes they were rarely willing to compensate their rightful guardians and husbands, preferring instead to decoy native women on to their boats or (as frequently happened) to take them by force. These same visitors paid no attention to native codes of morality and social intercourse,[24] and preferred to enjoy variety in sexual relations rather than to maintain one woman over a period. Any reasonably attractive woman was sexual bait to these men, some of whom admittedly tried to seduce as many of the younger ones as possible. Such an attitude has not been confined to this north-eastern coast. Many Europeans and Asiatics alike throughout the Northern Territory regarded all Aboriginal women as potential sexual partners, a state of affairs which exists to the present day. The behaviour of Japanese and European traders, trepangers and pearlers was modified in some areas because of the wariness and hostility of the Aboriginal men. At Groote Eylandt, for instance, native women were to some extent segregated from men even in their own camp life.[25] But in other regions, as in western Arnhem Land, it was accentuated.

Conditions of this kind resulted in various "massacres" and spearings, which continued until the Japanese were excluded and European trading was curtailed with the advent of the last war. But this period of what might be termed mutual antagonism had one good effect, which must not be underestimated. It forced many of these Aborigines to avail themselves of their natural

182 least equal, or if possible greater value, in order to maintain
431 his social status and to enhance his prestige. He achieves
461 this by his capacity to reciprocate a gift quickly and gener-
554 ously. If he failed to meet the obligations imposed, for
626 example by the kinship pattern, he would lose face, prestige, in his group. It will be evident that this feeling of shame and humiliation at failure to reciprocate a gift or to honour an obligation, apart altogether from any danger of incurring resentment and visitation by evil magic, furnishes one of the most powerful mechanisms which underlie the production of food and goods, and the circulation of these. This is well shown by an example given to me by my informants, which illustrates the use which can be made of this fact
262 to gain a desired objective. While a boy is still regarded as
●562 a child, there is no tabu even for his sisters upon eating the
784 food that he may capture. But immediately after the circumcision ceremony, when his social status is altered and he lives apart from his mother and father in the single men's camp, the food collected or killed by a boy becomes tabu to relations of certain orders, and is now known by a special name, *kälŋboi* (*vide* page 21).

262 The eating of all *kälŋboi* food is surrounded by tabus,
431 even for those relatives who are permitted to partake of it at
784 all. For "outside" or "distant" relatives under the kinship sys-
606 tem to eat this *kälŋboi* food is a special privilege, but the
584 obligation to make ceremonial return payments, again of the type called *tadoit*, is always present. *Kälŋboi* food may sometimes be used to ingratiate a young man with a woman who stands in the relationship of potential mother-in-law (*mukul rumaro*) to him, but whose daughter has already been promised (*wawun*) to another man some distance away. At first the *mukul rumaro* may refuse the *kälŋboi* food, but under coercion she may at length accept it, and

431 "good luck" in hunting. They make the hunter *mel kärku-*
[777] *luk*, far seeing, (lit. eye-clear). Such objects are given regu-
778 larly to friends and to members of other clans, particularly
[604] to people who stand in the relationship of *wäkku* (son, woman speaking: sister's son, man speaking) but although they carry the obligation to make heavy ceremonial presentations in return, any idea of straight-out exchange—in the sense of economic equivalence, of barter or trade, in connection with things that are *yarkomirri*, is unthinkable.

784 Under certain circumstances, and after a lapse of time, a
778 rite may be performed to remove the tabu from these objects, particularly from canoe paddles, to enable the women and children to be fed on the fish or turtle secured from the canoe, after which they become *wäkkinŋu*, "ordinary" or non-sacred, and lose their *marr*, their "power" (to the initiated) and their "danger" (to the profane).

422 Objects of the *wäkkinŋu* type come under no such restric-
435 tions. In the category of the non-sacred are all a
[771] man's ordinary possessions, his spears and other weapons, canoe, fishing lines, nets, harpoons and all his personal equipment, and for a woman, her yam stick, domestic implements and utensils, her baskets—and in fact all her possessions. For no woman may possess or use any object which is
[562] *yarkomirri*.

000 In the foregoing account some of the incentives which lie behind the gathering of food and the manufacture of weapons and material objects have been described. A number of questions now arise. Does a man make all his own weapons and the implements which he requires for his own use, or does he acquire weapons from other people and in turn make them for others? If so, how are these exchanges made and on what terms; how are values assessed, payments made? Is the matter one of straight-out barter, the balancing

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sitting around singing. I was afraid again because I did not know what they were going to do. I did not cry. I just looked down and said nothing. They told me to stand up on the logs and squat down over the hot stones. An old man stood by. He had some lily leaves that had been soaked in water. He threw the lily leaves on the hot stones. Steam came up all around me. This went inside my anus and into my body and all through it and came out my mouth. That is what those old men told me. 159 783 852

They told me it would make me very strong and clean me all out and make me all the same as the power song. I know now they did this for this reason and so that I wouldn't be greedy and could go a long time without food and without drink.

Two or three old men warmed their hands over the fire and put them to my mouth and talked to me. They said, "You are no longer a baby. You are growing up and going to be a big man. You must not swear at anybody. You must not lie. You must not chase after other men's wives." 159 852 [867]

Another old man rubbed my navel. He said, "This will make you very strong and you won't get hungry quickly and you won't try to eat too much food." One old man sat beside me. He picked up a piece of kangaroo. He said, "This one is not kangaroo. What do you call this one?" Another old man sat on the other side of me and whispered the power name of kangaroo in my ear. I called out the secret name of this food when I swallowed it. When I said this, all the old men who were sitting around in the men's chorus sang out, "Yai! Yai!"

That first old man then named all the kinds of foods that grow in the bush and that are game and that are fish, and he said this same thing to me and that other old man told me their power names. All the time the leader beat his singing sticks and sang the sacred names of these foods. This was the first time I had ever heard the secret language which only we men understand. No women hear these things. Women are profane and they would spoil them. These are things only for men to know. Children and women are not strong enough (pages 288-290). [198] [562]

He Grows Up—A Foreign Woman Seduces Him

My father and I went to visit my nati's people at Elcho Island (map, page 40). I was larger then, and my circumcision had been a few dry seasons in the past. Some Macassar men were there, and they said that the white men were getting very mean and cheeky and that they were going to stop the Macassar men from coming. They said that this was their last voyage and they would never come again. They said that white men were all the same as animals and that they were big men and had hair on them and were very fierce and they just killed people because they liked to kill. 159 648

532 131 The drawings in polychrome from north-
756 eastern Arnhem Land that accompany this paper[1] were made on sheets of stringy bark (*Eucalyptus tetrodonta*) by three medicinemen, called *marngitmirri*, members of Mildjingi clan of the lower Glyde River, and of two neighbouring clans, Liagauwumirr' and Ngalladar
617 Tjambarpoingo. Mildjingi is a clan of *yiritja* moiety and Liagauwumirr' and Tjambarpoingo are members of the opposite moiety, *dua*, in which certain terminal vowels, notably *i* and *o* are elided as an arbitrary mark of distinction
[117] between clans of different moieties whose members speak similar languages. In Wanguri clan of the Arnhem Bay area the word *kulong* is applied to the medicineman.

776 In each case the figures drawn by the medicineman
787 represent the spirits called *marngit*, two or more in number, which adopt certain men, often first subjecting
756 them to an ordeal or series of ordeals, after which they are known as *marngitmirri*—medicinemen—and are vested with the special powers of this cult.

The *marngit* or spirit familiars of two of the three medicinemen from eastern Arnhem Land who claimed to be *marngitmirri* are shown in Plates I and Ja. These *marngit* were said first to have visited the men whom they later adopted, subjecting them to a series of ordeals. Sometimes they brought sickness, in other cases, according to my informants, they inflicted injuries, sometimes actually breaking bones and almost killing the novice, after which they restored him and then invited the initiate in turn to try his own skill by injuring the *marngit* and restoring him. After a more or less lengthy period of trial by way of initiation, the *marngit* finally adopted the *marngitmirri* and thenceforth helped and guided him in the practice of the cult.

756 According to most of my informants, the cult of the *marngitmirri* or medicineman in eastern Arnhem Land is restricted to men only, although it is not a sacred cult and is not secret—that is, it does not depend upon ritual or supernatural backing, and is carried out in open camp without any secrecy, in the presence of women and children. Many of the *marngit*, the spirit familiars themselves, were said by my informants to be females. Although
[776] women do not appear to become *marngitmirri* they do
[791 practise as rainmakers. Some of the rainmakers of east
562] Arnhem Land, of whom there were three in Mildjingi clan—the clan of Wilindjango—were women, one of whom was renowned for her prowess with the rites and magical spells of the rainmaker. However, although rain-
[788] making depends upon the understanding and correct observance of certain rituals and the use of the appropriate

* *With Plates I and J*

[p. 97 (B)]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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conclusion that in north-east Arnhem Land, the natives really did know the physiological facts, but were not interested in them; they were only interested in 'spiritual conception', which established a person's place in the social and religious structure of the tribe. But whatever be the degree of knowledge or ignorance regarding the physiological facts, there is no doubt that the accepted spiritual doctrine is one of pre-existence. The unborn spirits sojourn at the totemic well waiting to be incarnated, or reincarnated; to that centre they will return after death; and without the entry of the pre-existent spirit child into the womb, there could be no conception.

Everyday Matters

Mr Chaseling is not concerned with discussing complex social and religious problems. His aim is to help us know the Aboriginal as he is. To this end he provides much information regarding interesting everyday affairs. There is no smoke-signal code in this region, and message sticks are simply aids to memory. The Aborigines like having visitors and are anxious to keep them. Like the rest of us, they are subject to flattery, and they use a highly developed form of praise in asking for favours. The status of the women is low, but some affection is shown between spouses; moreover, women do exercise an important influence on affairs; for they live longer on the average than the man (they are not killed in 'wars'), and as a result accumulate a greater knowledge of the everyday myths and legends and of the clan's enemies and friends. There are about three females to each male, another consequence of 'warfare', and connected with this is the fact that usually a man has three wives; but there are a few cases of men with up to twelve wives.

These and many like facts are recorded in the pages which follow, pages which will do much to help readers appreciate the Aborigines of north-east Arnhem Land as human beings,

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honour; sickness overtakes the offender, or the father may spear him.

New spears, knives, axes, and canoes are sometimes pronounced sacred and thereby impregnated by tabu. Custom provides for the use of such articles in inter-tribal presentations, and any responsible man may prepare them and paint his horde's totem on them. Nanyan, a youth of the Gerrkee horde, spent most of his time at Yirrkala, and I watched him make a spear and 'declare' it sacred. But the tabu could not be completed till he had killed with it, and when he speared a kangaroo it automatically became tabu to all but the men of his horde. After the meat had been eaten the oldest man present completed the ceremony by painting totemic symbols on it for Nanyan. He prized his spear and used it for a time in hunting; and because it had been ceremonially 'painted', the tabu was under control, and women and children of his own horde were allowed to eat meat killed with it, though on no account could the kill be shared with females from other hordes.

Nanyan later presented his spear to a man of the Kumite horde who had no totemic or marriage link with the Gerrkee. This 'alien' appreciated the courtesy and used the spear freely in the hunt, but only the initiated men could eat the food, the women and children not being allowed to share in the kill, because their horde had no associations with the spear's totemic centre. Finally the spear was formally returned to Nanyan who put it to normal use in procuring food for himself and family.

On patrol I visited a horde camped among the casuarinas near Caledon Bay, and in the evening saw the men return with a canoe loaded with fish. During the unloading I noticed that the women and children deliberately kept away and ignored the splendid haul, and I was told that the canoe

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and everything connected with it, including fish, turtle, and other food carried in it, were tabu to women and children. It appeared that two days previously the horde had migrated from the south and had brought a skeleton in the canoe, thereby rendering it tabu to women and children. It was another case of mumbakuta.

Sons and sons-in-law of the deceased person brought the fish ashore and ate them around a totemic well scooped in the sand. The leavings were carefully buried in the 'well' and the customary fire lit over them. The camp then went to the canoe on the beach, lit a fire on the sand, and taking leafy branches held them in the smoke and switched them over the canoe to hunt off the ghost of the dead man. Once the skeleton's influence on the canoe was removed, it was safe to travel in, and food could be eaten from it.

Skeletons are customarily carried in bark parcels and exert far-reaching influences, and 'mali', or ghosts, accompanying such bones must be placated. In an exchange I made with Yama for his father's bones (which I wanted to send to the Sydney Museum), I bartered several items for the complete skeleton in its bark cylinder with his horde's totemic symbols painted on the outside. Unknown to me, there were two powerful influences in the bark parcel, one in the bones and the other in the totemic symbols on the bark itself; for such bones laid a tabu on all they touched, just as they would have done if carried in a canoe, and the bark cylinder, by having a totemic sign painted on it, was sacred. Among the items I had exchanged for the skeleton was an axe, so it was agreed that for ceremonial purposes, this should absorb the tabu from the bones and also from the bark cylinder. Thereafter only the nearest relatives could touch it. To remove the skeleton tabu from the axe, Yama cut open a tree containing a bee's nest. Because of the tabu, only fully initiated men of the horde could eat it; but after the meal, the axe was painted to make it

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775 763 hundred miles away, and it was thought that two Yirrkala men had been killed. The men who were with me immediately supported the tidings with the evidence of the fires in the bush, that had obviously been lit by the mali of the dead men, who had travelled the hundred miles to inform their friends.

775 Unexpected and distant smoke is at times considered to come from mali camp-fires. Without consciously contradicting the statement that mali are spirits, Yulengor complacently attribute unrecognizable footprints and other physical functions to them. An unknown canoe carried in on the tide or found on an island is accepted as having been used by mali when hunting or fishing.

562 881 Women have been assigned a very inferior place in aboriginal society, and it almost seems that they attend some ceremonies to focus attention on the men. But at least one ceremony is carried out entirely by women, at the coming of a first menstrual period.

A young wife, on recognizing the menarche, informs her mother, who then forbids her to leave her windbreak. Food and water are brought to her, and most likely she will [285] [302] curl up in her 'nganmurra', or cone-shaped mat, till she recovers. She is painted with two bands of clay below the shoulders, and red, yellow, and white vertical lines are made between these bands. Whenever menstruation recurs, 362 841 women smear themselves with ochre and painstakingly abstain from eating men's food. Dugong, turtle, fish, and [302] birds are regarded as men's food, and men are expected to [462] spear them; women content themselves with collecting yams, roots, and shellfish. With undisguised chagrin, a wife in this temporary quarantine will sit with her husband and his wives round the camp-fire, painted red and with her back turned, and will nibble a yam or shellfish whilst the family consume turtle, kangaroo, or fish.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Family Life in the Jungle

A FAMILY is the most important unit in aboriginal society, and the horde is founded on it. Some families have as few as three members; the largest I saw was that in which Wonggu had twenty-six wives and fifty children. A horde consists of a father's family and his sons' families, and if a few generations of sons escape their enemies' spears the horde is a large one. Upon this simple horde-family relationship depends the entire intricate, bewildering, and far-reaching aboriginal social organization.

Polygamy is an ancient custom and has an economic basis, for women are the chief food-gatherers and are coveted as assets and never regarded as expensive luxuries. A man cannot foresee the number of wives he is to have, but he hopes for several, and as his influence increases there is a tendency to bestow women on him. Bestowal of women is so arranged that old men obtain young wives and young men generally receive old widows, and incongruous as the arrangement may seem to us it ensures that old men have active women to hunt for them and their elderly wives, and that the young men, well able to look after themselves, make do with elderly widows. Prestige lies with the old men, and they enforce the practice despite constant objections from both the young men and the young women. As youths grow older their authority increases and they in turn bargain for young women.

Women live a much harder life than men, and are neglected and unwanted as they grow old before their time;

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888 [562] perhaps partially blind, with rheumatism stiffening their joints, and with their small and once shapely hands calloused and twisted through digging. In a mustering camp, I overheard casual remarks which led me to suspect that two old women had been left by younger wives to perish in the bush. None of the Yulengor attached any importance to the story, and I found it hard to obtain reliable information. They were just not interested, and by the time I arrived on the scene, the aged women had been dead for a day or more. One had been blind and had been left at this camp in the sand-hills without water or shelter, although both were to be had a few chains distant. Countless dingo tracks led to and from the horror we buried under a pile of stones.

595 462 Stone Age man is usually benevolently disposed toward his wives, but when he has a number of them he tends to leave the work to them, and only as he feels inclined does he exercise a man's prerogative and hunt for kangaroos, wallabies, and emus, or spear fish and turtle. He is expected to control his women. He adds little to the small-talk, and when he does make a remark it is generally of the kind that implies: 'When I ope' my lips, let no dog bark.' Old Baratjuna reclined in camp whilst his wives prepared for the hunt. Some were going to a distant swamp, others were to forage near by. One wife wanted to go to the swamp, but her husband told her to stay in the camp and mind the young children. She complained for a time, and seeing that she provoked no response she made a move to go to the swamp. But before she had taken a dozen paces her husband threw his stone axe at her and broke a rib; that, as far as he was concerned, ended the incident.

595 562 [584] From childhood, women take an inferior place; they are often studiously ignored; they are treated as chattels, yet genuine family affection does exist. The constitution of a family is sometimes conducive to good feeling, for a man's

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wives are often sisters—a relationship which is likely to be favourable to very young wives, who often are no more than ten or twelve years of age when married and go to live with their older sisters. More than likely, the mother will later follow them to the outskirts of the new family circle; there to sit by her own small fire and to be suffered in silence by her son-in-law. Young wives are married as children and are regarded by the husband almost as nieces. Older wives, according to their disposition, may treat these children kindly or force them to hew and carry and attend their whims. Older women give the younger ones rigid training in wifely duties, and the arrangement often works out happily. I have seen young wives, and old ones too, cry without restraint when they have been unable to accompany the husband on a hunting trip.

It has been said that aboriginal women are treated with constant brutality and that they play an unimportant role in the decisions of the horde. This is not so, although a wife is at the disposal of her husband and the tone of her existence depends upon his character. Stone Age woman's life is hard, like that of all Stone Age nomads, but her influence is much more important than is popularly imagined. Women join in all camp disputes—indeed, with their gossip they often cause them—and their voices can be heard above the din of shouting men and howling dogs. In peace-making ceremonies they taunt the offenders, abusing them and brandishing digging-sticks in their faces, and they urge their sons either to make peace or destroy the offender. I have seen several peace-making ceremonies collapse because women urged their men to attack the offenders who were suing for peace.

In rare instances termagants control their families and sons' families by criticizing, nagging, and threatening. Late one day I came out of the bush to a camp where Yakangaiya and his married sons were sitting quietly in

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562 578 groups by their fire, cooking fish and waiting for their wives and mothers to come with food and firewood. For an hour or more Damilipi, the oldest of Yakangaiya's wives, partially blind, stark naked, and switching flies with a bunch of twigs, strode up and down haranguing and insulting her men, accusing them of cowardice and laziness in not raiding their [628] hereditary enemies and continuing a feud which was dying by mutual consent. Damilipi's campaign was continued for two days, and as other women joined her the horde was roused to the point of organizing a killing party. Weeks later the men attacked, and in the reprisals two of Damilipi's sons and a daughter-in-law were killed.

583 [582] Wives may be acquired by bestowal, by the passing on of widows, or by theft or capture. Bestowal is the most frequent method, and tribal law provides that a woman must marry her father's sister's son or, should this be impracticable, an equally well-defined alternate husband is provided. Relationships are ageless, and if there are no women in the right marriage-relationship a man not infrequently remains a bachelor till a woman is captured or an elderly widow is available.

Peculiarities result from the practice of bestowal, in that a man does not acquire a mother-in-law by marrying her daughter, but conversely he marries a daughter because her mother has always been his mother-in-law. Several brothers may have the same mother-in-law, who may not have enough daughters for them all, and this gives rise to the practice of promising even an unborn wife to a prospective husband. 'Inipi' is a rite whereby an acceptable son-in-law takes the sebum from his cheek by the side of his nose and anoints the abdomen of his mother-in-law, sometimes while she is still in her infancy, and thereafter all her children come under the special care of the son-in-law, who makes presents to her sons and marries her daughters. By the Inipi rite, one of several brothers may have prior claims and obtain several

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times an innocent tribal-enemy is accused of having become a raggalk to cause the death, and more often than not the accused openly admits the allegations, and though he be constantly pursued by the avengers he glories in his spurious notoriety. [754] [428]

Simpler magic known as 'borrpoiyuma' is brought to bear on a victim through his personal possessions, footprints, or excreta; anyone may practice the art without special training. A victim is spied on till he is seen to drop sweat, spittle, or urine, and his enemy lights a fire over the spot to heat the sand. The victim receives this heat in his abdomen and dies by slow torture. Should he realize that his trouble is due to evil magic he may counteract it by finding the fire and throwing water on it. In the case of ordure, the witch-doctor deposits it in a fire in a circle of stones, and a large flat stone and sand are packed on top to make an oven, which is left untouched for one or two moons. By that time the curse has worked and the victim has died in agony from pains in his stomach. [755]

A Blue Mud Bay nomad made a gift of armlets to a man from the Wessel Islands. Months after the gift had been made the Blue Mud Bay man developed sores on his arm and attributed them to the visitor's evil magic, and it was said that he caused them by throwing the armlets into a fire. In this instance the magic did not prove fatal, for the victim stemmed it by pursuing his 'enemy' and spearing him! Dilly-bags, pubic shields, or belts impregnated with sweat, are also means of contact between a witch-doctor and his prey. When a woman went blind for no apparent reason, it was surmised that her dilly-bag had been stolen and burnt. Her normal good health was evidence that magic had been used against her, but because she was a woman it was not worth while to search for the evil worker. [562]

Injuries may be inflicted by burning an enemy's waste

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YULENGOR

A goanna was among the many sacred totems in the canoe, and he fared better than the rest; he swam ashore and hid in a lagoon. His lagoon is now an important totem centre, and the lesser-spirit, or mali, of the goanna guards it. As in many underground springs, the water occasionally bubbles up in the lagoon, and this is a sign that the goanna is moving below. No women are allowed near the totem, and if yams in the vicinity are eaten the results are fatal. Old men who remember the Macassars told me that when they attempted to make their trepang camps on the beach by the lagoon the Yulengor got rid of them by refusing to allow them to use the water or to gather firewood.

Restrictions are enforced on firewood in the area, because the goanna sent his mali into one of the trees growing by the spring. When the Junkgowa followed the goanna ashore, they were attracted by the singular beauty of this tree, for as well as the goanna-mali they saw a small red parrot in the branches. They declared that thereafter the feathers of this parrot were to be used in decorating totems of the Dua moiety. The tree was pronounced sacred; there are now many of them near the lagoon, and the tabu has been extended to them all.

Totems, or 'rungga', floated ashore, and the Junkgowa hung them in the tree to dry. But when the pandanus palm armlets were washed up on the beach, they sprang to life and grew of their own accord, and the Junkgowa stripped them of their fronds and wove them into the first aboriginal armlets, dilly-bags, and nganmaras. These articles are in everyday use, but because the Junkgowa made them, they are also totems, and their story is preserved in the songs and ceremonies of the guardian horde.

Two other sacred centres were visited between Blue Mud Bay and Cape Arnhem, where the Junkgowa performed miracles and taught their children totemic secrets and dances. It is the record of these activities, some of them so trivial as